



## **GUIDANCE ON SUPPORTING AND ADVISING TRANSGENDER STUDENTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The College takes pride in providing a sensitive and supportive environment for students who want to disclose their trans status to the College or students who transition while studying at the College. It recognises the importance of staff understanding the law and its implications as well as being familiar with gender issues. This guidance is designed to provide support to members of staff who are aware of, or are supporting, a student who is considering transitioning to their self-identified gender, is in the process of transitioning or has transitioned. It is intended to be informative rather than prescriptive and to set out a framework for the sensitive support of trans people.

### **What is Gender transition?**

People are identified at birth as male or female on the basis of their sexual characteristics. For most people, their physical sexual characteristics, gender identity (how a person feels themselves to be) and gender role (how they behave in society) are consistent. For other people, gender is a spectrum rather than a binary choice. They choose to express their gender identity to reflect this. Sometimes there can be a mismatch between a person's gender identity and their gender role, which can lead to deep distressing feelings called gender dysphoria. This is a recognised medical condition, not a mental illness, for which treatment can be appropriate. Transition is the process of changing a person's gender permanently from the one assigned at birth to the gender with which that person identifies. This may or may not involve medical and surgical treatment. Gender transition is different for everyone as some people will try to suppress their discomfort, some will elect to live permanently in the gender that is most comfortable for them without seeking medical treatment, and others will choose to follow a process called gender reassignment. *In this guidance we will use the term 'gender reassignment' in the broad sense used in the Equality Act 2010.*

#### **1. APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE**

The following points may be helpful regarding how to treat people who are transitioning. The College recognises the following as good practice:

- It is respectful to use a trans student's chosen name, not their birth name. It is never appropriate to put quotation marks around the trans student's chosen name or ask what their 'real' or 'birth' name is.
- A person who identifies as a certain gender, whether or not they have taken hormones or had surgery, should be referred to using the pronoun (he, she or they for a single person) appropriate for that gender. For example, if the person wears a dress and uses a woman's name, the feminine pronoun is likely to be correct. If a staff member is unsure what the correct pronoun is, they should ask the person what they prefer. Alternatively, the gender-neutral pronoun zie can be used.
- Similarly, the correct title should be used. In addition to the titles Mr, Miss, Miss etc., they may prefer to use Mx or Msc. This will need to be reflected on Campus Connect.
- It is unlikely to be appropriate to use the terms 'sex-change' or 'pre / post-operative' as these imply that the process of transition must involve some form of surgery, which may not necessarily be the case.
- Have respect for people's boundaries. Ask the person's permission before asking any personal questions. Questions such as 'are you taking hormones?' can be considered personal.
- Respect their privacy. Do not tell others about a person's gender history without their prior consent.

#### **2. THE TRANSITION PROCESS**

The steps below provide an overview of a typical transition. Each individual's situation will vary depending on a range of factors, including whether or not they opt for medical procedures and whether they receive medical assistance privately or on the NHS.

- i. The student informs the College that they want to transition to their self-identified gender and will start living within their chosen gender role.
- ii. After at least three months, the student may begin hormone therapy.
- iii. At the student's request the College can register a preferred name as an interim measure until the student can submit evidence of the change of name (e.g. a deed poll or statutory declaration) at which point we can process a full change of name on the student record system.
- iv. The College will keep a record of the student's previous name on the student record system but this will only be used to connect any documentation or records relating to their previous name to their student record.
- v. After at least 12 months, the person may undergo surgery. After two years of living in their chosen gender, whether or not they have undergone surgery, the person may apply for a gender recognition certificate.
- vi. A gender recognition certificate is awarded and the person is issued with a new birth certification. The person is now legally recognised in their chosen gender – and all documents and references that have not already been changed must now be changed.

### **3. INFORMING THE UNIVERSITY**

If students wish to notify the College of their intention to transition, they can notify the College of this intention in writing and address it to, amongst others, their Personal Tutor, academic / administrative staff in their Department or a member of Student Advisory & Wellbeing. The recipient of the letter will act as the primary contact in this process.

If appropriate, the primary contact can organise a meeting with the student and Student Advisory & Wellbeing to discuss support for their transition. At the meeting, the student should be informed about the support available within the College and the student should be asked to let the College know about any dates that have been set for the commencement of real-life experience or medical appointments. This will allow Student Advisory & Wellbeing to develop an action plan for their support during their transition.

The student should be encouraged to discuss who they would like informed of the transition and how and when they would like the University to inform relevant staff and students. The meeting should also include a discussion about amending the College's records.

#### **Initial Meeting and Planning**

An action plan, including timescales should be agreed to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken during the student's transition. The action plan should be confidential and there should be agreement on where the copies of it should be kept and who should have access to it. The action plan will allow the College to find out in advance any arrangements for time off study and to agree when changes to records are likely to be necessary. It will need to be flexible enough to respond to the student's needs and be reviewed periodically with the student concerned. Special attention will need to be given to students whose studies involve undertaking course placements.

The action plan should cover:

- The date when the student intends to commence any real-life experience. This may include the expected point of a change of name, personal details and gender, and the steps that need to be taken to prepare for that point and the amendments to records and systems that will be needed;
- If the student wants to continue their studies, the supportive arrangements and adjustments that are available
- When to inform the department and fellow students in person and whether the student would like to do that or would prefer that to be done for them;
- When the student will start using any single-sex facilities
- Any plans the person might currently have to start hormone therapy and/or undergo surgery;
- What emotional support can be put in place for the student should they feel they require it, e.g. counselling, mental health support, referral to other relevant agencies;

- Explanation of how the student is covered by existing policies relating to issues such as Confidentiality, Equal Opportunities, etc.
- A range of different areas. A checklist is attached to this Guidance at Appendix A.

### **Photo Records**

A trans person may not choose to permanently present in their self-identified gender, for example until the hormone therapy starts to alter their body. The transition will not be instantaneous as it will take several years to transition fully to the opposite gender. However, over time their physical appearance will change. Therefore, the College recognises that the student may need to update the photo on their College Card and the photo held in Campus Connect at several points throughout this period and they should visit the Student Services Centre to arrange this as and when required.

### **Name Change**

To change your name with the College you will need to present one of the following documents to the Student Services Centre:

- Passport
- Change of Name Deed or Deed Poll
- Statutory Declaration
- Public Announcement

For full details about this process please refer to the [Change of Name policy](#). As part of registering your new name with the College, your name will be updated on the student record system, your College Card and College Email Address. If you have any of the following cards you will need to contact the Students' Union to get these updated:

- National Union of Students (NUS) card
- Volunteer/mentor ID badges
- ID badges
- Union Bus Annual Pass cards

We will keep a record of your previous name on the student record system but this will only be used to connect any documentation or records relating to your previous name to your student record.

The College also recognises that some students may not wish to identify as male or female or feel that they have a more fluid identity while they transition. The preferred sex would appear on all student accessed records and in data returned to HESA. The University's own reporting would do everything possible avoid the risk of breaching student confidentiality.

Once a trans student changes their registered name at the College, they should also contact any relevant external bodies to ensure there is no delay, for example in receiving payments from Student Finance. The trans student is responsible for this:

- Online records, e-portfolio/record of achievements, academic biographies
- UCAS forms (if they are still in the applicant stage)
- Programme and module lists
- Personal tutor records
- Welfare/disability/counselling records
- A Sponsor
- Volunteering and mentoring records
- Club and society membership records
- Student Finance UK
- Visas and Immigration (for visa holding students)

The College recommends that the name the student chooses to register with us should be the name they are planning to use on all official documents (e.g. their passport) otherwise certain institutions or organisations may not recognise their qualification in future, if the name on the degree certificate does not match the name on other official documents.

## **Informing Others**

The College understands that one of the most significant moments for the trans student will be when they wish to start presenting in their self-identified gender publicly. It is crucial that this is continually supported and communicated well to those that they work and study with.

The College will discuss with the students when students and staff should be informed about their transition, what information they should be given and how this should be presented. This could be by letter, statement or in person but must always respect the student's wishes including their right to medical confidentiality.

As far as the Department is concerned, the law recognises that someone under medical supervision who is transitioning may require substantial periods of time off study to undergo medical procedures. Therefore, they have the right to be treated in the same way as someone who is absent for reasons of sickness or injury. The student does not need to give specific details about the medical appointments (for example details of the procedures undertaken) when advising the College, providing they can supply the necessary evidence of appointments/surgery dates as appropriate.

Staff also need to be aware that there may be side-effects of medication that may adversely affect performance.

If the student is intending to undergo gender reassignment surgery, the staff in the College will need to discuss with the student what time off for surgery and recovery they will need as well as what process, support or adjustments will be needed to ensure the student remains on the course or can return when they have recovered.

Therefore, if appropriate and with the agreement of the student, the following people may need to be informed:

- Academic Department / School teams such as tutors, PAs and support staff
- Fellow students
- Student Wellbeing
- Student Loans Company
- Student Administration & Student Services Centre
- Library
- Sports Centre
- Volunteer Placements / Work based study placements

## **4. PRACTICAL ISSUES**

### **Student Admissions**

Staff involved in student admissions should be aware of transgender issues and the profound effects that being transgender can have on someone's life. They should ensure that potential applicants are aware of the University's support for transgender people and handle any specific queries sensitively. The College will give particular consideration to agreeing the date from which an applicant's gender, and where relevant, name will change at the pre-enrolment stage, ensuring that UCAS or other application forms are amended. This will enable all subsequent identification to be produced accordingly. If applicants have fully transitioned before joining the College, they will need to contact the College's Admissions to verify their change in gender and, where relevant, name. Thereafter the student will be treated as being of the affirmed gender. The applicant will need to notify the Student Finance and other funding bodies to ensure payment and enrolment records match.

### **Accommodation**

A student who advises that they are transitioning, or intend to transition while at the College, and who applies for accommodation will generally be housed in their preferred style of hall but each case will be discussed upon application. If a student has started as one gender in a single sex flat and then redefines their gender, Student Accommodation will always look to move them to their preferred type of accommodation, space permitting. If there is no suitable alternative, releasing them from their contracts

will be considered. All students will have access to all necessary facilities of the gender with which they identify.

### **Confidentiality**

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 it clear where disclosure will happen and allow for the arrangements to be changed at any time if the student wishes. In specified circumstances, the Gender Recognition Act prohibits disclosure of the fact that someone has applied for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC), or disclosure of someone's gender before the acquisition of a GRC. Such disclosure constitutes a criminal offence liable to a fine.

### **Communicating with Others**

It is important to agree with a trans person how they want others to be informed of their transitioning. It may be helpful for the College to provide specific briefing sessions for staff or fellow students who come into contact with the trans student to enable them to raise any concerns and ask questions about appropriate behaviour. These session(s) should give both general information about transgender people and specific information about how the particular individual wants to be treated.

### **Forms and Questionnaires**

The College recommends that when designing forms or questionnaires, it may be helpful to include an option such as 'prefer not to disclose' and 'non-binary', or the option of 'other' with an open text box (where possible), in addition to 'male' or 'female'. It may be helpful to also explain what this information will be used for, as this may affect how some Trans people respond. Language on forms and in policies should be gender neutral.

### **Friends and Family**

The College recognises that it is not only the trans student who is affected by their transition, but also the people who are close to them, which may include students and staff at the College. They, in turn may need support. Students should be signposted to possible sources of advice and support, such as Student Wellbeing, Student Counselling, Welfare and Disability & Dyslexia Services, and the Students' Union Advice Centre.

### **Sports and Leisure Activities**

The Gender Recognition Act recognises that, in certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to restrict trans people from participating in certain competitive sports in their acquired gender identity. This is to ensure fair competition and the safety of all competitors. These considerations depend on a number of physiological factors and should be decided after consideration with the involved parties. However, the trans student should be given the same access to the Sports Centre and sports clubs as a non-trans student. Furthermore, single-sex clubs should admit trans members, provided they can show identification in the appropriate gender.

### **Changing Facilities and Toilets**

It is important that a trans student should have access to 'men-only' and 'women-only' areas – such as changing rooms and toilets – according to the gender in which they present. The College will agree with the trans student at what point they will change their use of single sex facilities, possibly when they start to live in their acquired gender. The College will try to designate some toilet facilities as gender-neutral, especially in new buildings, though it recognises that this can be more difficult in older buildings. It is not acceptable to restrict a trans student to using a toilet designed for disabled people.

### **Confirmation of Identity**

As not all trans students will hold a birth certificate that reflects their self-identified gender, the College will give students the option of providing more than one type of official identification, for example a driving licence or passport as well as a birth certificate. Furthermore, the College recognises that during transition, a trans student may use more than one name for different purposes. This is not illegal as long as it is not used for fraudulent purposes.

## **Discrimination and Harassment**

The College recognises the right of every individual to choose whether or not to be open about their gender identity and history. Bullying, harassment and discrimination are unlawful and will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under the College's Code of Practice on Personal Harassment for Students. The College undertakes to ensure a prompt response to all complaints of transphobic abuse, harassment or bullying and treat them with due respect, relevant confidentiality and fairness. Depending on the circumstances, some may be dealt with informally and in others there may be grounds for disciplinary actions, including ultimately dismissal or expulsion from the University. Some indicative examples of unlawful direct discrimination, as well as of more general harassment, include:

- Refusing to support a student who is trans
- Verbally or physically threatening a trans person or spreading malicious gossip about that person
- Refusing to associate with or ignoring someone because they are a trans person
- Persistently 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, including by disclosing information to individuals or groups – i.e. outing someone. This can possibly be a criminal offence
- 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.

The College will also not tolerate transphobic propaganda whether as written materials, graffiti, music or speeches. It undertakes to remove any such propaganda whenever it appears on the premises. When investigating a complaint of harassment or bullying, it may be necessary to disclose the student's trans status to named persons. This will only be done with the written consent of the trans student. If the trans student feels unable to agree to this disclosure, it must be explained to them how this may impact the investigation and limit the action that can be taken.

## **5. PROCEDURE FOR GRADUATES**

The name that appears on a Degree Certificate and the Diploma Supplement will be the full name of the individual as recorded on the student record system at the time they complete the degree. Under the Gender Recognition Act 2004, the College is required to reissue a degree certificate in a new name once a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) has been obtained. It is not good practice to request to see a GRC. In order to change the documents retrospectively, the College will need:

- Proof of name change and proof of ID
- The returned original degree certificate, or written confirmation that it has been lost or destroyed

The College will need to:

- Save a copy of the evidence on the student record.
- Amend the student record – surname, forenames, gender, title, – as applicable
- Re-issue the Pass List and Certificate

The relevant administrator processing the change should write to the following areas explaining that the student has changed their name:

- The Alumni team
- The Careers Service

If a Gender Recognition Certificate/Birth Certificate is submitted, then all records to the previous identity must be replaced by the new identity. No link between the old identity and the new identity can remain.

---

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Checklist for supporting students who are transitioning
- Appendix B: Support & resources
- Appendix C: Glossary
- Appendix D: Relevant Legal Acts

## Appendix A Checklist for supporting students who are transitioning

<b>1</b>	<b>Main Contact</b>	
	Identify a single point of contact to support the individual, agree an action plan and coordinate arrangements between different areas of the College and SU. This role would normally, but not necessarily, be undertaken by a member of Student Advisory & Wellbeing.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Timetable</b>	
	What is the likely timetable for transition e.g. for dates for changes to name, use of facilities and records	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Name</b>	
	What identification needs to be changed? College Card National Union of Students (NUS) card ID badges Union Bus Annual Pass cards Club and Society cards Volunteer/mentor ID badges Email address	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Process</b>	
	Is the student taking any extended time off? Does the student want to continue their current programme of study, interrupt for a set time or come to some other arrangement?	
	Is time off needed for medical appointments?	
	How can ongoing non-medical procedures be accommodated?	
	Is there any planned surgery? Recovery may take between one and twelve weeks, depending on the surgery and any complications.	
	What adjustments can be made to minimise the impact on a student's learning? E.g. extensions to deadlines, resits	
	Are any temporary adjustments needed following surgery?	
	Are any adjustments needed to work placements?	
	Are there any risks to the individual e.g. in relation to third parties or media intrusion, and how will this be handled?	
	Are extensions to deadlines needed if students need time out to attend medical appointments, or if they are experiencing side effects from medication or complications following surgery?	
	Are any arrangements needed in relation to social activities such as competitive sports where teams and changing facilities are based on gender? Email <a href="mailto:ceo@su.rhul.ac.uk">ceo@su.rhul.ac.uk</a>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Support for the Individual</b>	
	Is the student aware the LGBTQ Officer who may be able to put them in contact with other students who have transitioned? Email <a href="mailto:lgbt+@su.rhul.ac.uk">lgbt+@su.rhul.ac.uk</a>	
	Is the student aware RHUL Society has a trans students' rep? RHUL LGBT+ Society. Email: <a href="mailto:lgbtsociety@su.rhul.ac.uk">lgbtsociety@su.rhul.ac.uk</a>	
	Is the student in contact with the college nurse and/or doctor?	
	Is the student aware that externally the voluntary organisation Gendered Intelligence offers free support groups for transgender youth, or one-to-one mentoring and counselling for a fee?	
	Students with a pre-existing mental health condition, who receive a Disabled Student Allowance, may have funding for regular mentoring. Contact Disability & Dyslexia Services.	
	The Counselling Service may be able to offer a student support (typically 2-4 sessions) in thinking about any issues in relation to being a transgender member of the College.	
	Is the individual receiving gender identity counselling through a specialist clinic?	
	Check whether the student is in any financial hardship refer and to Financial Welfare if appropriate.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Communication</b>	
	How will staff and students in the department be informed? Can a statement be agreed?	
	How and when will external contacts e.g. placement providers be informed?	
	Is there a training need?	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Discrimination</b>	
	Are there clear guidelines and processes to deal with direct or indirect discrimination or harassment of a trans person?	



## **Appendix B. Support & resources.**

### **Within the College**

- Student Wellbeing
- Student Counselling
- Disability & Dyslexia Services
- Finance
- Equality & Diversity

### **Within the Students' Union**

- Vice-President (Welfare & Diversity)
- LGBT+ Representative
- Advice Centre

### **Local Organisations**

- Outline Surrey
- Stop Homophobia/Transphobia Campaigns
- NUS LGBT Campaign

### **National Organisations**

- [The Beaumont Society](#) is a self-help support network for the transgender community.
- [Broken Rainbow](#) is a national organisation offering support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse.
- [Depend](#) is an organisation offering free non-judgemental advice and support to family and friends of transgender people in the UK
- [The Gender Trust](#) is a support and information centre for trans people and their families. It also provides advice for employers and others who encounter gender reassignment issues in their work
- The [Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(GIRES\)](#) initiates and promotes research into gender identity
- [Gendered Intelligence](#) offers a group support network for trans students and those questioning their gender identity
- [Mermaids](#) is a support group for gender variant children and teenagers who have issues with their gender identity and their families
- [Press for Change](#) is a major support and lobbying organisation for UK trans people
- [Queer Youth Network](#) is a national voluntary group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people
- [Trans Media Watch](#) dedicated to improving media coverage of trans and intersex issues
- [The UK Intersex Association \(UKIA\)](#) campaigns and supports intersexed people

### **Print and Video Resources**

- Government Equalities Office (2011). [Headline findings from our transgender online survey](#)
- The [NHS](#) has produced two free video stories, which may be useful for raising awareness - *Transgender - Jay's Story* and *Transsexual - Ruth's Story*.

## **Appendix C Glossary.**

<b>Cisgender:</b>	Someone who identifies as cisgender has a gender identity and expression which is in line with their physical sex, and with the gender identity that they were assumed to have at birth.
<b>Gender Identity:</b>	Your gender identity is the way in which you would define your own gender, be that as man or woman, demi-girl, Agender, any form of non-binary gender, or any other way of expressing and identifying your own gender. This is not linked in any way to your sexual physiology, though for cisgender people these two will be similar.
<b>Misgendering:</b>	To misgender someone is to refer to them by an incorrect gender, either by placing someone upon the gender binary, or failing to acknowledge their presentation against your own assumptions e.g. referring to a Transman early on in their transition as 'she'.
<b>Non-binary:</b>	Someone who identifies as non-binary identifies somewhere along the spectrum of possible genders, or identifies as having no gender at all, rather than using the binary terms of man and woman. Some non-binary might refer to themselves as trans, while others will see this as an umbrella term, but not one which directly refers to them.
<b>Passing:</b>	The act of 'passing' refers to the idea of 'passing privilege', which is where someone who defines into a marginalised group can be perceived as not being a part of that group by wider society. This can have positive implications in terms of safety and, sometimes, acceptance, but can also create problems around identity and expression, as many people feel they should not have to pass.
<b>Presentation:</b>	The way in which one presents is how they outwardly project their gender identity, be that in terms of physical mannerisms, voice, clothing, make-up, hairstyle, or any other.
<b>Sexual Orientation:</b>	Your sexual orientation is who you are sexually attracted to, based upon their gender. This includes homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, demisexual and countless other ways of identifying your sexuality and orientation. This is different from, but may interact with, your gender identity.
<b>Transgender:</b>	Someone who is transgender does not identify with the gender identity they were given at birth based on their physical sex. Physical sex does not affect someone's identity who is transgender, as it explicitly refers to gender, which is about yourself, your presentation, rather than your body.

## **Appendix D Relevant Legal Acts**

- i. The **Equality Act 2010** has strengthened and streamlined previous equalities legislation. It lists gender reassignment as one of the 'protected characteristics' within the act. The definition of gender reassignment within the Act gives protection against unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation to a person who has proposed, started or completed a process to change their sex. This means that a person who has the intention to permanently live or who is already living in their self-identified gender role is protected. They do not have to be under medical supervision or undergo a medical process to get this protection. It also protects those who are discriminated against because of their association with the trans person.
- ii. In the past, a person's legal gender could only be defined by their birth certificate and that could not be changed. Under the **Gender Recognition Act 2004**, individuals who have undergone gender reassignment can obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC), which enables them to acquire an updated birth certificate. This means that they are legally recognised in their confirmed gender for all purposes. If the College needs to see proof of identity, other documents, such as a driving licence or passport will be requested.
- iii. Under the **Data Protection Act 1988**, trans identity and gender reassignment constitute 'sensitive data' for the purposes of the legislation. As a result, information relating to a person's trans status cannot be recorded or passed to another person unless conditions stipulated under Schedule 3 of the Data Protection Act are met.
- iv. The **Human Rights Act 1998** provides protection to trans people, principally under the right to private life. This has been interpreted broadly by the courts to cover sexual identity, their lifestyle and the way they choose to look and dress. Also the way personal information is kept.

*(Updated April 2017)*