

Guide for HR staff, managers and
staff supporting students

Supporting a student or
member of staff who is
transitioning



Equality Challenge Unit

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Transitioning is the term used to describe the process someone goes through to change from one gender to another, with or without medical intervention.

This guide – for human resources (HR) staff, line managers and staff supporting students – outlines the main steps to take into consideration when supporting a staff member or student during and after transition.

The decision to transition is not something a person undertakes lightly and the support of managers and colleagues, staff and fellow students is vital. As not all trans people will be under medical supervision, ECU does not recommend asking for a doctor's letter as evidence of intent to transition.

Every person is different: some people transition with ease and others do not; some people will transition to their preferred gender full-time and others will choose to live in their preferred gender part-time.

The length of time it takes for a person to transition can differ vastly depending on whether they choose to undergo surgery, and therefore the length of time it takes to see a psychiatrist and a gender identity specialist and whether they transition under the NHS or privately.

Whatever the individual circumstances, it is important that institutions are flexible, supportive, and make clear that discrimination and harassment against trans people will not be tolerated.

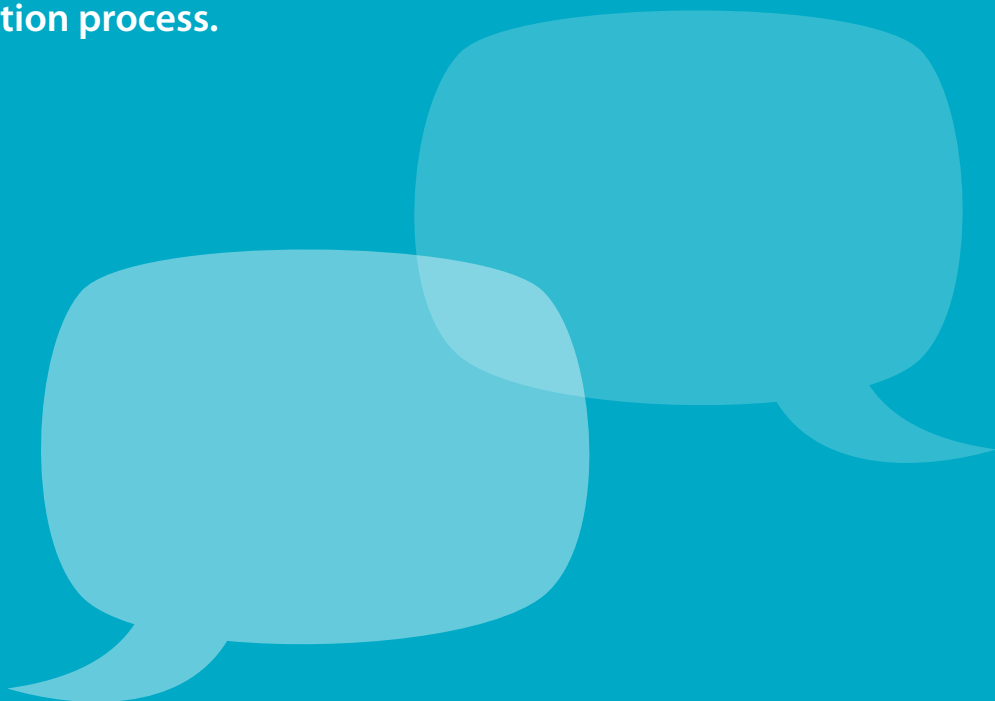
In this short guide we use a variety of terms including 'gender identity' and 'trans'. Please see the section on terminology in ECU's guidance *Trans staff and students in higher education: revised 2010* which explains the terms used in this guide and elsewhere. The full guidance also provides further information on promoting trans equality and developing monitoring systems, and practical issues from student accommodation to sport.

Press for Change, the Gender Trust, GIRES and the Scottish Transgender Alliance have information on gender identity if you would like to read more.

ECU (2010) *Trans staff and students in higher education: revised 2010*
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/trans-staff-and-students-in-he-revised

Arrange an initial meeting

Once a staff member or a student has notified the institution of their intent to transition or that they are transitioning, a face-to-face meeting in a private space should be arranged with them to discuss what support the institution can give during and after the transition process.



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The trans member of staff or student should have the option to be accompanied by a colleague, friend or a trade union or students' union representative to this meeting.

During the meeting you should discuss how they anticipate their transition may impact upon their work or study, inform them of the support available and ask them to let you know of any dates that have been set (eg for medical appointments).

Consider with the member of staff or student whether a larger meeting is needed and who should be invited (eg their manager/tutor/head of department). Before this meeting it might be useful to send invitees information about gender identity issues (eg ECU's publication), any institutional policy on trans issues, and a covering note explaining the person's intention. The note should include a clear statement of confidentiality.

Agree an action plan

Agree an action plan including timescales with the person to ensure that appropriate steps are taken during their transition. It should be made clear that they need only disclose information to enable the institution to support them. The timescale will help the institution to consider any necessary arrangements for time off work or study in advance and when changes to records are likely to be required.

The action plan should be kept confidential, and discussion should take place with the individual to agree where copies should be kept and who should have access.

A real-life experience is a specified period of time in which a person lives full-time, including work or study, in the gender with which they identify. This is order to gain access to treatment such as hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery. The length of a real-life experience varies from person to person, but is usually between one and two years.



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The action plan should include the dates or expected timescales of:

- = appointments with doctors
- = the start of any real-life experience
- = when to inform the person's department
- = the start of any hormone therapy and/or medical procedures
- = any change of name or personal details, such as title
- = change of gender

The action plan should also consider:

- = which amendments to records and systems will be required
- = whether trans people are adequately covered by existing policies on confidentiality, harassment and corporate insurance, and if not, how these will be amended
- = whether training or briefing of colleagues, fellow students or service users will be necessary, when this will occur, and who will carry this out
- = whether they want to inform relevant people (line manager/colleagues/students) in person or for this to be done on their behalf
- = whether they want to continue in their current role/programme of study or consider redeployment/deferral or another arrangement
- = ways to minimise disruption to studies

The calculation of insurance premiums and benefits may take into account gender reassignment so your institution may need to check with their insurers if they are required to provide information about employees' trans status. Written consent from the staff members concerned should be obtained before disclosing the information.

Manage the reactions of others

Agree with the trans person if and how they want to tell people about their upcoming transition, whether individually either face-to-face or by email, or by arranging a meeting with their colleagues or fellow students. If practical, invitations for a meeting should be sent to anyone they work or interact with frequently.



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Discuss the content of any meeting, letter or email with the trans person in advance. They should be free to choose whether to tell people themselves, or for an announcement to be made by a chosen representative.

Make sure that a senior member of staff within the person's department – and in the case of students, their residence – is seen to be supportive. They should make it clear that the individual has the full support of the institution, and reiterate the institution's commitment to equality and its policy on harassment.

The senior member of staff should emphasise that from that day or another predetermined day onwards, the person will have

changed gender and should be addressed by their new name and title (if applicable) and using the appropriate pronoun.

Provide an opportunity for other members of staff or students to ask questions in person or by email, either of the person concerned if they are comfortable, the meeting host or another relevant person. It may be appropriate to circulate basic ground rules on showing respect for trans people (see appendix C of ECU's publication).

Training may be helpful for colleagues and fellow students if staff or students are transitioning. It is good practice to involve trans staff or students in the planning and design phases if possible.

Support changes in gender presentation

Before a person starts to present in their preferred gender, it is important that the institution plans with the staff member or student what will happen. Institutions should ensure that everything is in place when a person starts to present in their preferred gender to avoid any contradictory information.



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Ensure that you:

- = update staff/student lists, organisational charts, databases, and records
- = provide new ID cards including, for example, library and canteen cards
- = handle membership of gender-specific sports clubs and societies with care and consideration

Degree certificates and pensions information require specific ID – refer to ECU's full guidance for details.

Bear in mind that it can take several years to transition fully. During this time the trans person may experience extensive physical changes, so it may be necessary to update photo ID regularly throughout this period. In some cases the person may require identification in their former as well as their new gender.

Staff and students should be given more than one option of acceptable ID for official purposes, as many trans people are unable to, or choose not to, obtain a new birth certificate but can get an updated passport, driving license and bank details.

Occupational health and counselling services should be available for the person to consult in confidence. Counsellors may not have specialist expertise but can provide emotional support.

A trans person should have access to single-sex changing rooms and toilets, according to the gender in which they present. It is considered good practice for an institution to install private changing cubicles and non-gendered or single-stall toilets.

Equality Challenge Unit works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in colleges in Scotland.

www.ecu.ac.uk

Twitter: **@EqualityinHE**

For further information see:

ECU (2010) *Trans staff and students in higher education: revised 2010*

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/trans-staff-and-students-in-he-revised

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