

Policy & Guidance for Transgender, Transitioning and Gender-Questioning Students

Student Success

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1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1. Solent University is an inclusive university, with a rich and diverse student and staff community. We foster a culture which encourages all students to freely express their identity, in a respectful and non-judgmental environment.
- 1.2. When you join us, or at any point during your student journey, you may question or change your identity, including pronouns, preferred/known name, and sexual orientation. We recognise each person's journey will be individual to themselves and as a university we strive to support you during this period of transition, whether your transition is social, medical or legal.
- 1.3. This policy is designed to focus on the support and advice that we can offer to you when you express an identity different to your sex at birth, have begun or undergone the process of gender reassignment, or self-define as trans, non-binary or gender non-conforming.
- 1.4. We are dedicated to offering commitment, support and understanding to students who intend to transition or are transitioning, throughout the process. We understand that each student's needs are different, and we aim to provide support to you in a sensitive and empathetic way.
- 1.5. As part of our commitment to Equality and Diversity, Solent University strives to provide a culture and environment where all students may study, work and live without encountering discrimination, victimisation or prejudice and treats all students with dignity and respect in compliance with the Equality Act [\(2010\)](#).

2. Disclosure & Seeking Support whilst at Solent University

- 2.1. Legally, you are under no obligation to disclose information to the university that you wish to or have taken steps to identify as a gender different to your sex at birth, however we do encourage you to notify us as soon as you can if you would like your new gender identity to be recognised on university systems, where this is possible.
- 2.2. Making a disclosure at an early stage can also enable us to support and assist you in the best way possible. We advise that you contact our [Student Hub team](#) who can offer a central point of contact for support and with your permission assist you to navigate the transition with academic and other support services.

3. Change of name and/or gender

- 3.1. We recognise and aim to support you if you wish to be known by a different name than your legal name on university systems or formally change your name.
- 3.2. Names and pronouns are integral to self-identity and must be respected and recognised. In the UK it is possible to change your name informally. However formal change of name facilitates the change of identification in relation to education, degree, and qualification certificates.
- 3.3. We encourage you to inform fellow students and staff of your pronouns whether that is through conversation and/or as part of your email signature, to help prevent mis-gendering, and to remove barriers for non-binary and trans people. We also have pronoun badges available to collect from the Student Hub.

3.4. We encourage you to notify us of your known name. You can tell us that you have a preferred/known name and/or pronoun as part of the online registration process – this is a name different to your legal name. You can also update or change your preferred/known name on the student Gateway system at any point during your studies. This will mean that:

- Your email name will show as your preferred/known name (although your actual email address and username will remain the same, as this is made up of elements of your legal name);
- Your name on MS Teams will show as your preferred/known name;
- Your campus card can be printed with your preferred/known name (if you change this part-way through an academic year, you can request a new card free of charge from the Student Hub). If your appearance has changed significantly, you can also request a new student card with an updated photo.

3.5. Your academic staff may not have access to, or regularly check, the student records system, so if you have a preferred/known name or pronoun you wish to be addressed by, we advise that you let your academic staff know. You can speak confidentially to your personal tutor who could assist you with sharing this information across your course team. If you have any concerns or worries about how to start or have that conversation confidential advice and support is available from the Student Hub. The Student Hub team can also speak to your personal tutor, course team, or other key staff (on your behalf) to ensure that anything you want them to know about your gender identity is shared in a sensitive and confidential way. You can also visit the [Student Minds](#) website where you can find helpful information.

3.6 There are certain things that will remain in your legal name:

- Your degree certificate (or any other certificates) issued at the point of qualification.
- You will need to apply for any Government student finance in your legal name.

If you change your legal name by Change of name deed, on the production of evidence, we can update your university records.

If after leaving university, you legally change your name, a new certificate in your new name can be issued. You can email certificates@solent.ac.uk with evidence to request this.

4. External bodies

For some courses you will be required to register with an external body or may require professional membership. You will need to consider how you would like to contact them to discuss any change of personal details if required.

Please note that we cannot accept any responsibility for any consequences arising from the change of name which occurs outside the university; if you change your name within the university, you should also notify all other relevant external bodies of the change.

5. International students

- 5.1.** If you are an international student residing in the UK you can acquire a deed poll or a 'statutory declaration of name change' to update records maintained by UK institutions, including the university and the UK Border Agency. However, to update records in your home country, such as passports, you must adhere to your country's respective procedures. For guidance on name change processes, you can seek assistance from your country's Embassy or High Commission.
- 5.2.** We understand that as an international student facing the prospect of transitioning in the UK, especially if you are residing in countries where transgender individuals are not recognised or may be at risk of persecution, you may encounter significant challenges. You can seek confidential support from the International Support Service at the university and be assured that we ensure that information regarding your transitioning is stored and processed securely in accordance with data protection legislation.

6. Time off for medical appointments

- 6.1.** We understand that you may need to take time off for medical or therapeutic appointments during the transition process. These absences will be regarded in the same way as any absence for medical reasons.
- We encourage you to let your tutors know that you will be absent (you do not need to share details of the reason for your absence).
 - You must log your absence on the attendance monitoring system. You can self-certify for up to 7 calendar days. Absences of more than 7 calendar days will require approval by relevant staff and you will be asked to supply relevant evidence.
 - We encourage you to catch up with any missed learning available via SOL, or through a 1-1 with your tutors.
 - If you are an international student studying on a student visa, you should also make our [International Student Support](#) team aware, as unapproved periods of absence will trigger attendance warning correspondence and you must ensure that you comply with the conditions of your student visa.
- 6.2.** If your absence is likely to last for over 4 weeks, we encourage you to suspend your studies, due to the amount of missed learning, and the potential impact on your studies and outcomes. We understand this can be a big decision, but it is important that this option is considered if you would benefit from taking some time away to focus on your wellbeing and be in a better place to study and achieve your potential. You can visit the Student Hub to discuss your options and the implications of suspending your studies.

6.3. If your ability to submit assessments or sit exams is impacted by your medical treatment, you may be able to apply for [extenuating circumstances](#).

7. Graduation

At Graduation, your legal name will be read out, however you can request on the day of your ceremony that your preferred/known name is read out, and your card will be amended. Please note your legal name will still appear in the Graduation book, and on your certificate.

8. Confidentiality

Confidentiality of a person's transgender status is essential. Under data protection legislation, sensitive information such as a person's transgender identity and details regarding gender reassignment (referred to as "special category data") are afforded specific protections. We will never reveal an individual's transgender status without their explicit written consent. This includes providing references for potential employers or institutions, where your affirmed name, chosen pronouns, and title will be utilised.

9. Discrimination and harassment

We take allegations of bullying and harassment seriously, and we encourage you to disclose any incidents of this nature to us via our Report + Support form. You can either do so anonymously or share your details with us so we can discuss your options for formally reporting (both to the university and to the Police if you wish to do so) and ensure that you are offered support if this has had an impact on your wellbeing. You can also report incidents to us that you witnessed even if you were not directly impacted by them. The Student Hub is also a Hate Crime Reporting Centre.

Should you wish to formally report any incidents of this nature where the alleged party is a student then you can do so through the Student Disciplinary Procedure, if the alleged party is a member of university staff, you can do this through the [Student Complaints Procedure](#). For advice and support with these procedures, you can visit the Student Hub or the Students' Union.

10. Support within the University

- [Therapy & Mental Health team](#): A free and confidential service available to all students. Our Mental Health Advisers can help liaise with external specialist services to ensure you receive the most appropriate support.
- [Student Hub](#): Our Student Advisers can provide advice and guidance throughout your student journey, including discussing any impact on your studies, and options moving forward, as well as practical support such as printing a new campus card,

and liaising with your academics. We can also provide advice and guidance around university procedures.

- **Student Funding**: The student funding team are experienced in supporting students who intend to transition or are transitioning and understand the financial impact this can have. The team can offer confidential information, advice and guidance on a case-by-case basis and help you with all matters relating to your student finance and funding entitlement. The student funding team also administers non repayable support grants and bursaries.
- **Students' Union**: The Advice Service offers independent, confidential and free advice and guidance on university processes including appeals and complaints. The SU also runs the LGBT+ Student Society.

11. External Services

The list of useful contacts given below is correct at the time of writing (March 2024). Please check the web for up-to-date contact information. Please note that Solent University does not endorse or take responsibility for the information provided by external organisations.

- Equality and Human Rights Commission is the statutory body responsible for protecting, enforcing and promoting equality across nine protected characteristics — age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation — equalityhumanrights.com.
- [The Beaumont Society](#) is the largest transgender support group in the UK. It promotes better understanding of the conditions of transgender, transvestism and gender dysphoria.
- [LGBT+ Switchboard](#) provides a one-stop listening service for LGBT+ people on the phone, by email and through Instant Messaging – Tel: 0300 330 0630.
- [Beyond Reflections](#) are a charity supporting trans, non-binary and questioning adults as well as their friends, families and allies in England and Wales.
- [Stonewall](#) helps organisations including HEIs and colleges to recognise the benefits of the perspectives of lesbian, gay, bi and trans* people for all employees, service users and members of the community. It is also a campaigning organisation.
- [Depend](#) offers advice, information and support to all family members, partners, spouses and friends of trans* people.
- [National LGBT Hate Crime Partnership](#) brings together 35 LGBT organisations from across England, Wales and Scotland and is led by the LGBT consortium on behalf of the EHRC. It aims to increase the reporting of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crimes and incidents and improve the support available to those targeted.

Appendix A

Legal framework

There are various key pieces of legislation that govern this area of equality and protect people against unlawful discrimination:

Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999

This protects a trans* person who is intending to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment from the moment of decision to begin the process.

Gender Recognition Act 2004

This allows a person who has completed transition, and who meets certain criteria to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate. This certificate allows for official change of identity on documents (e.g. birth certificate) and in processes (e.g. marriage) in the new gender. The Act makes it unlawful to pass information about a person's trans* status to a third person without the consent of the trans* person. This legislation is currently under review and will likely change.

Equality Act 2010

This includes the Gender Equality Duty. This requires institutions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, and to promote equality of opportunity for all gender.

The Equality Act 2010 says that you must not be discriminated against because of gender reassignment.

In the Equality Act, gender reassignment means proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process to reassign your sex.

To be protected from gender reassignment discrimination, you do not need to have undergone any medical treatment or surgery to change from your birth sex to your preferred gender.

You can be at any stage in the transition process, from proposing to reassign your sex, undergoing a process of reassignment, or having completed it. It does not matter whether or not you have applied for or obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate, which is the document that confirms the change of a person's legal sex.