

# Transgender Students at the University of Otago Guidelines and FAQ

*This resource has been modelled off [‘Transgender people at the University of Auckland Guidelines and FAQ’](#) resource and adapted for the University of Otago.*

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## What is being transgender?

Being transgender (or “trans”) is the state of one’s gender identity not matching the one that was presumed at birth. The sex that doctors put on birth certificates when people were born is often referred to as assigned sex at birth, or designated sex at birth.

Being transgender can be described as being:

- A person whose identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender roles, but combines or moves between these.
- A person who was assigned a sex, usually at birth and based on their genitals, but who feels that this is a false or incomplete description of themselves.
- Non-identification with, or non-presentation as, the sex (and assumed gender) one was assigned at birth.

Cisgender people are people who feel like their gender has always matched their assigned sex at birth.

## I think/know I am transgender and I am studying at the University of Otago.

Great! Firstly, Every trans person has a different journey and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. There is an enormous amount of gender diversity and many people do not fit neatly into the category of ‘woman’ or ‘man’. People can identify with neither, both or feel that their gender changes. Some of the terminology that people use includes genderqueer, gender fluid, agender and bigender. Many Trans folk pursue a social transition (such as changing name and pronoun) and/or a medical transition (such as surgery or hormonal treatment). Again, every trans person’s journey is different and you have the right to determine what that looks like for you! We can support you with matters relating to your involvement with the University, as well as providing a community to support you on your journey.

## What resources are there for me?

- **OUSA's Student Support Centre** exists to make your student experience as trouble-free as possible. We're a free, confidential, friendly service, located on 5 Ethel Benjamin Place (look out for the bright green flags). Come and see us about anything - academic, hardship, wellbeing, flatting and advocacy!  
E: [help@ousa.org.nz](mailto:help@ousa.org.nz); P: 03 479 5449.
- **The Queer Support Coordinator** at the OUSA Student Support Centre offers one to one support, group support, peer support, resources and regular events. Email the Queer Support Coordinator at: E: [q.support@ousa.org.nz](mailto:q.support@ousa.org.nz); P: 03 479 5445.
- **UniQ** is the student run group for Queer students on campus. They run regular social events such as: weekly meet ups called QTea, XO parties, and Quiz nights. Email UniQ at: [OtagoUniQ@gmail.com](mailto:OtagoUniQ@gmail.com). They also have a closed Facebook group: search for [UniQ Otago](#).

## Gender Neutral / Unisex Bathrooms

Trans students have a right to use the bathroom that best fits their identity, and this includes access to gender neutral bathrooms. Because of the lack of gender neutral bathrooms available on the University of Otago campus, Disability Support Services are happy to share the single stall accessible bathrooms with Transgender and gender-diverse students.

We appreciate that some people might feel uncomfortable using an accessible bathroom for a variety of reasons. Please feel free to give feedback to [q.support@ousa.org.nz](mailto:q.support@ousa.org.nz).

We have collated a list of gender neutral bathrooms available on campus. You can download the list here: <http://www.ousa.org.nz/support/queer-support/transgender/> . Collating this list is an ongoing process, so if you would like to add a bathroom to the list or amend a bathroom already listed please email: [q.support@ousa.org.nz](mailto:q.support@ousa.org.nz).

## What administrative processes can a trans student follow at the University of Otago?

### Changing Your Gender

If you are a domestic student you will need to enrol using the gender marker that is on your birth certificate. If you are an international student you can provide documentation on enrolment that has the gender you want recorded. The preferred documentation is a passport. If your passport does not have the correct gender then the process for making a change is the same as for domestic students.

Post enrolment there are a number of ways you can change your gender marker on university records to 'X', Female or Male:

1. *Provide a statutory declaration.*

To find out how to fill in a statutory declaration and/or print off a blank form visit the [justiceofthepeace.org.nz](http://justiceofthepeace.org.nz) website and click on '[What can a JP do for me](#)'.

A Justice of Peace will need to sign the Statutory Declaration. JP Services are available at the University of Otago on Wednesday mornings. To see the roster go to:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/student-services/otherservices/otago020802.html>

Please make sure you provide the *original copy* of the statutory declaration to the [University Information Centre](#) - <http://www.otago.ac.nz/services/uic.html>

2. *Take your passport to the University Information Centre (UIC).*

If you have changed your gender marker on your passport you can take your new passport to the UIC. Staff will make a copy of the original document and witness it for you.

3. *Mail the documentation to Admission and Enrolment (address below).*

You can get a JP to witness a statutory declaration or a copy of your new passport and then post to Admissions and Enrolment. For JP's on campus see link above for the roster.

*Note:* Any documentation containing a change of gender must include both your assigned gender and your correct gender. You can write something like "Although my birth certificate shows my gender as \_\_\_\_\_ I request that the university record my gender as \_\_\_\_\_". Please also include your full name and student ID number.

Post the required documentation to:

Manager of Admissions and Enrolment  
University of Otago  
P.O. Box 56  
Dunedin

## **Changing your name**

### *Legal Name Changes*

If you have not legally changed your name but would like to visit <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Births-deaths-and-marriages> for information on how to do this and the costs involved.

If you have legally changed your name you can update the university records, by supplying evidence of your name change (amended birth certificate or a legal name change certificate).

Once your name is legally changed, all university records are updated:

- Previous names remain under restricted record and should not appear on any documents unless you have requested that this occur.
- Graduation certificates can be re-issued with official documentation of 'gender change'. Contact the [Manager, Student Administration](#).

### *Known Name (aka chosen name, preferred name)*

You can change your known name at any time by going into the personal details section of your eVision portal.

- The known name does appear on your ID card and the database of student information.
- Both the legal and the known name appears on class lists.
- The known name does not appear on graduation certificates, diplomas, or transcripts.
- At present, a known name may not be used to make a user name.

If you see that your legal name or your known name are not appearing correctly on university material by please contact the University Information Centre or email [university@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university@otago.ac.nz).

## More resources

### *Local and National Support and Resources:*

- **Agender NZ** is a Non-Profit Organization, which has been supporting Transgender people and their families throughout New Zealand since 1996. Visit their website: <http://www.agender.org.nz/>
- **Genderminorities.com** is a cross cultural and peer led organisation for transgender, transsexual, takataapui, intersex, and other sex and gender minorities. <https://genderminorities.com/>
- **Intersex Awareness New Zealand (IANZ)**, [www.lanz.org.nz](http://www.lanz.org.nz), is registered charitable trust and provides information, education and training for organisations and professionals who provide services to intersex people and their families
- **Outline** is a helpline, staffed by self-accepting GLBTTFIQQ people who have trained to help others over the phone in issues around gender and sexual identity. Visit the website: <http://www.outline.org.nz/home/www.outline.org.nz> or phone 0800 OUTLINE.
- **Rainbow Youth, RY**, is an Auckland based charity that supports queer & gender diverse youth in Aotearoa. Visit the website: <http://www.ry.org.nz/>.
- **South Trans NZ** are a Facebook group established by trans people, for trans people. Their aim is to provide information, education and support for those who are trans in our community, and for significant others in their lives. Find them on Facebook: [SouthTransNZ](#).
- **TraNZGear** are a group of New Zealanders helping trans people access transitional products to aid them with their daily lives. If you are under 25 you can apply for a FREE binder! Visit their website: <http://www.tranzgear.com/> or search [Tra NZ Gear](#) on Facebook.
- **UniQ** provides a social support service designed to meet the needs of Dunedin-based queer and questioning students. We provide safe, queer friendly spaces and regular social events. Email: [OtagoUniQ@gmail.com](mailto:OtagoUniQ@gmail.com) or find them on Facebook: [UniQ Otago](#).
- **Youthline** were established to ensure young people know where to get help and can access support when they need it. Visit their website: <http://www.youthline.co.nz/>; phone: 0800 37 66 33; FREE text: 234; Email: [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz).

### *Takatāpui*

- **Hui Takatāpui** is the single biggest gathering for takatāpui (GLBTI) Māori from across the country and internationally. Be part of the Hui Takatāpui whānau on Facebook by searching [Hui Takatāpui](#).
- **Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau** resource by Elizabeth Kerekere. Available from <http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/> by searching [Takatāpui: Part of the Wānau](#).
- **Tapatoru** is a Wellington based group that supports Trans whanau. They have a monthly ezine called Tatou. Visit their website: <http://www.tapatoru.org.nz/>.

### *Rainbow People's from the Pacific Islands*

- Part of the Auckland based, Village Collective, the **Rainbow Collective** works towards building a supportive environment for the Pasifika Rainbow community. Pasifika Rainbow youth often face challenges relating to family and peers acceptance as well as lack of cultural understanding from non-Pacific. Chat on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/VillageCollective](http://www.facebook.com/VillageCollective) or visit their website: <http://villagecollective.org.nz/what-we-do/rainbow-collective/>

### *EquAsian*

Auckland based EquAsian is a social-support group for LGBTIQ people of all ages who descend from all parts of the Asian region. In a nutshell, EquAsian's philosophy is 'equal and Asian'. Chat on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/equasiannz](http://www.facebook.com/equasiannz) or visit their website: <http://equasian.org.nz/>.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is language important?**

Many of the terms that have been used to refer to trans people were coined or claimed by groups who were hostile to trans people. Because of this, some of the terms you may know are loaded with a history of prejudice and abuse. Using the correct words shows that you are aware of, and sensitive to, trans issues.

### **What are the appropriate words?**

“Trans” or “transgender”, both used as adjectives (that is: “a trans person” or “a transgender person” rather than “a transgender”), are generally the most acceptable terms. People may prefer certain words be used to describe them, in which case you should default to those. Other terms you might encounter include:

- Fa’afafine, Fakaleiti, Akava’ine, Mahu, Vaka sa lewa lewa, Rae rae, Fafafine: are Pasifika terms that typically describe an assigned male at birth who does not have a male gender identity and often, but not always, lives as a woman. These terms are best understood within their cultural context.
- Whakawahine: Māori term describing someone assigned male at birth who has a female gender identity.
- Tangata ira tane: Māori term describing someone assigned female at birth who has a male gender identity.
- Takatāpui: Māori term describing Māori people who might otherwise use terms such as transgender, intersex, bisexual, lesbian or gay. This term interweaves cultural identity with sexual/gender identity and is best understood within the cultural context.

### **Why are pronouns important?**

Pronouns are important because they not only form a big part of a person’s identity but their misuse can severely compromise a person’s safety. Deliberately using the wrong pronouns is showing a lack of respect for a person’s identity, although it is accepted that when a person is changing mistakes will be made. If you make a mistake, don’t panic! Simply apologise, correct yourself and move on.

### **What are common pronouns?**

The most commonly used pronouns are ones that are already in common use: “she/her/hers”, “they/their/them”, and “he/his/him”. There are other less common sets. The set which is correct to use is the set which the trans person has advised you to use.

### **Trans man and trans woman: which is which?**

A trans man will often prefer to be referred to by “he/him” pronouns, will want to be referred to as a man, and will often want to present himself in a way seen as socially as male. Trans men are generally assigned female at birth, and move away from this assignment. The opposite is true for trans women.

### **Does everyone fit into the categories of trans man and trans woman?**

No. There are a lot of people who do not feel comfortable fitting into either category. Many people are somewhere in between, some associate with neither, some consider themselves something else entirely, and some feel that their gender changes. Some terms people may use to describe themselves are: gender queer, Bi gender, or Agender.

### **What is “transitioning”?**

Gender transition can be a lot of things. Most people who transition go through a social change, which can involve some or all of a name change, change in pronouns, change in dress and other changes.

Gender transition is not necessarily a surgical operation. Any and all medical aspects of transition are personal information, and are not a necessary part of transition.

**Someone has told me that they're transgender, but they look, dress and act the same as always. What's going on?**

Transition is a long, slow and sometimes difficult process. For personal, social and sometimes professional reasons a person may make changes in an unexpected order. For example, a trans person may come out to a number of individuals, but still not be open publicly about it, and as such may not be ready to use a new name or change the way they dress. Another person may change their name and come out publicly, but may not present in a way associated with their correct gender for various reasons. The appropriate way to deal with this is to quietly ask what that person uses with regards to name and pronouns, and to accept that the way this person presents themselves may not conform to your expectations.

**Is being transgender the same as cross-dressing?**

Absolutely not. Cross-dressing is presenting yourself as a gender you are not, where as a trans person would be presenting as the gender that they are. Referring to a trans person as a cross-dresser or a drag queen or king implies that they are not truly the gender they identify as, and is extremely hurtful.

**Is being intersex the same as being Transgender?**

“Transgender has to deal with your gender identity whereas intersex has to deal with your biological characteristics.” “Often intersex people get surgeries that they don't want, and transgender people have to fight for surgeries that they do want.”

*Intersex* is an umbrella term that has been in use for the last 60 years. Intersex includes over 30 variations where the sexual anatomy &/or the chromosomes are not the standard male or female.

For more information, support and advice, email: [g.support@ousa.org.nz](mailto:g.support@ousa.org.nz)