

# VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

# GENDER AFFIRMATION GUIDE

Diversity & Inclusion

2020

Version 1.0 - November 2020

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# MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

## PROFESSOR PETER DAWKINS

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT



Inclusion and engagement is at the very core of Victoria University and we take great pride in and supporting our staff and students wanting to affirm their gender in the workplace.

This guide outlines our role in ensuring an individual's gender affirmation journey is a positive experience. We all contribute to the culture at VU, and in doing this, we must demonstrate behaviours of inclusion, support, acceptance and understanding in our workplace.

This guide is designed to support trans and gender diverse staff and students, to ensure full participation at work and in study and appropriate assistance is provided.

At VU, we are committed to embracing our greatest asset; our people. Nurturing a diverse working and learning environment allows us to benefit from the experiences, knowledge and unique perspectives of our staff and students, which allows for greater connection to our wider community.

Valuing and recognising our staff and students is essential for the positive growth of the university. We strive to create a working and learning environment that ensures everyone is provided with opportunities to reach their full potential; this is our moral purpose. We also aim to create a place where staff and students feel confident, are respected and have an experience that is free from discrimination.

**Peter Dawkins**  
Vice-Chancellor and President

## PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This Guide was developed in conjunction with the Victoria University Gender Affirmation Procedure.

The purpose of the guide is to provide information to a person affirming their gender and to supervisors, managers and colleagues of staff and students who affirm their gender. The guide can be referred to when developing a gender affirmation plan to ensure consideration is given to the requirements and responsibilities that may need to be navigated through the process. The guide also outlines the responsibilities of supervisors, managers and colleagues of staff and students affirming their gender.

Key terminology, resources and contacts are also included in the guide to better support all staff and students

## THE TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Gender identity or gender expression is what feels most natural to a person. People who identify as trans or gender diverse assert their gender(s) differently to the gender they were assigned at birth.

The trans and gender diverse experience is a unique and extremely personal experience for each person and different people may choose to express their gender in a number of ways, which can also evolve, or vary as time or context presents. Trans and gender diverse people may hold a strong connection to their trans experience. Identifying as 'trans', can be a history or experience, rather than a set identity.

A person's journey may be restricted due to circumstances or access to information and resources. Data about the numbers of trans and gender diverse community is scarce, yet it is safe to conservatively estimate that trans and gender diverse people are in most universities and workplaces. Some may have affirmed their gender and others may not have.

People in the trans and gender diverse community may describe themselves using a number of terms. Some may identify as female, male or non-binary. It is respectful to always use the term preferred by the individual.

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Term	Proposed meaning
<b>Agender</b>	Agender people find that they have no gender identity, although some define this more as having a gender identity that is neutral.
<b>All gender facilities</b>	Toilets, showers, or other amenities which do not have gendered signage and can be used by a person of any gender or gender identity.
<b>Gender Affirmation</b>	A personal process where a trans or gender diverse person implements steps to live as their defined or affirmed gender identity, rather than the gender assigned to them at birth. Transition may involve social, medical/surgical and/or legal steps that affirm a person's gender
<b>Transgender</b>	<p>The term is sometimes shortened to trans, and is used to describe those who define their gender identity differently to the sex they were assigned at birth.</p> <p>Common terminology includes Transwomen (M to F) referring to those who were born male but identify as female; although many will identify only as female. Transmen referring to those who were born female but whose gender identity is male (F to M); although many will only identify as male and not transmen.</p>
<b>Gender diverse</b>	People whose understanding or expression of gender does not conform to social expectations based on their sex assigned at birth.
<b>Sex</b>	Refers to the chromosomal, gonadal, and anatomical characteristics associated with biological sex
<b>Gender</b>	The socially constructed categories assigned to individuals at birth based on their apparent sex
<b>Gender identity</b>	A sense of an individual's self as trans, genderqueer, woman, man, or another identity, which may or may not differ from the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.
<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	LGBTIQA+ is an acronym for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, intersex, queer and asexual. The plus (+) serves to capture the many other groups within the gender diverse community
<b>Non-binary</b>	This is an umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary
<b>Gender non-conforming</b>	A term to describe people who have a gender expression that does not conform to traditional gender norms. For example, exhibiting

	behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits that do not correspond with the traits typically associated with one's sex
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# GENERAL INFORMATION

Each person will have their own unique journey in affirming their gender and there isn't a set way to go about navigating through the process. In order to provide support in the best way possible, including personalised support, we encourage staff and students to maintain open and honest communication where relevant. This will allow expectations to be outlined, and will ensure your experience takes place in a respectful and collaborative way.

Open and honest communication is encouraged and our aspiration is for the university to be a place where people can affirm their gender without fear of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

## GENDER AFFIRMATION

Gender affirmation is a personal journey a person takes to confirm the gender they identify with. This process may include;

- ◆ **Social** affirmation, which can involve a number of changes to the way you identify outwardly. This may include: changing names and pronouns, trying new clothing and hairstyles, using your voice differently, and tucking and binding body parts to name a few.
- ◆ **Medical** affirmation, which involves medical interventions such as hormones or surgery
- ◆ **Legal** affirmation, which can involve changing your legal gender marker and name in official documents and records to live as your defined gender(s).

## EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Knowledge is key in creating inclusive environments. Many people may not have a connection with the trans and gender diverse community. Education will assist with building an inclusive work or learning environment for everyone. The university provides a number of workshops about the LGBTIQ+ and gender diverse community and gender affirmation specific sessions can be arranged for relevant university cohorts. Speak with a Diversity & Inclusion team member (see Table 1 – Key Stakeholders For Staff) for support and information about organising these sessions. For trans and gender diverse information and resources, visit [www.transhub.org.au/allies/employers](http://www.transhub.org.au/allies/employers)

## SENSITIVITY AND RESPECT

All people should be treated with sensitivity and respect in relation to their personal circumstances. A person who is affirming their gender will be taking a major step towards an

empowering journey. You're encouraged to be open minded and respectful, engage in encouraging and assuring conversation to demonstrate your support. If you have questions, ask them respectfully and courteously and listen to the person's needs and apprehensions. Your support is vital to establishing safety and inclusion for a person during their gender affirmation journey.

## SAFETY

Staff and students are encouraged to report discrimination, harassment or bullying behaviour. There are a number of people who can be contacted if a staff or student wishes to raise an issue

## FACILITIES

All staff and students are supported to use facilities which best reflects their gender. All gender facilities are available across the university and Table 4, below, outlines the all gender facilities available on each campus.

Table 4 All Gender Facilities at VU

Campus	Building	Floor	Room Id	Toilets	Urinals	Shower
City	225 King Street	2	K2013	2	No	No
City	301 Flinders Lane	GL	FLG20	3	No	No
City	295 Queen Street	BL	ROBL15	2	No	No
Footscray Nicholson	Building N	1	T126	4	No	2
Footscray Park	Building M	GL	M025	2	Yes (open urinals)	No
Footscray Park	Building M	GL	M027	6	No	No
St Albans	Building 4	1	4N117A	2	No	4
Sunshine	Building A	1	A125	1	No	No
Sunshine	Building C	1	C115 C115a	8	No	No
Werribee	Building 1 (west campus)	1	1B129	8	No	No

Pride rooms and community spaces across VU

Campus	Building	Room
Footscray Park Campus	Building E	Room 106
Footscray Nicholson Campus	Building T	Room 103 (8:30am-9pm)
St Albans Campus	Building 4N	Room 115
City Flinders Campus		Room G123

# INFORMATION FOR STAFF AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER

In this section we will outline key steps and considerations in the process of affirming your gender at work.

## INITIAL DISCUSSIONS

The university is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and encouraging space for staff. The goal is for you to feel supported and empowered to have discussions with a manager about your plans to affirm your gender. If you do not feel comfortable to do this, there are a number of contacts you can access. (See Table 1 – Key Stakeholders For Staff or Table 3 – Key Stakeholders For Students)

It is recommended you establish a support team of people you are comfortable with and who are willing to be advocates for you. Ideally this group will include your manager.

## DEVELOPING A GENDER AFFIRMATION PLAN

We recommend you consider developing a gender affirmation plan.

A gender affirmation plan can assist with communication and strengthen inclusion between a person affirming their gender, their peers and managers. The [Gender Affirmation Plan for Staff template](#) is designed to assist initial conversations and planning towards affirming a person's gender. This is intended as a guide and can be modified as appropriate.

It is recommended that staff have a plan in place to reduce the possibility of miscommunication or misunderstandings. The template encourages setting targets, contacts and milestones. Having a plan in place helps build relationships and will in turn benefit the university community more broadly.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Having a support network can improve your gender affirmation experience, and will help to ease the mental load by knowing you have support around you. It may be of some relief to know that not all the responsibility sits with the person affirming their gender. Some questions you may wish to consider are:

- ◆ How and when you would like to communicate your gender affirmation and plan to key stakeholders.
- ◆ Who would you like present in these conversations? Think about any key ongoing relationships you have. Do you have their contact details; such as email or phone number, or do you have access to a third party who can provide you with support?

Ideally communication should commence with social gender affirmation. Having a communication plan in place may help to create a positive, less daunting experience.

Please see the Appendix for a suggested email communication.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR STAFF

Table 1

FOR STAFF	
<b>Ally Network Contact Officers</b>	<a href="https://intranet-vu.edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/DiversityAndInclusion/AllyNetworkContactOfficers.pdf">https://intranet-vu.edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/DiversityAndInclusion/AllyNetworkContactOfficers.pdf</a>
<b>Discrimination, Harassm and Bullying Contact Officers</b>	<a href="https://intranet-vu.edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/DiversityAndInclusion/DHBOfficers.pdf">https://intranet-vu.edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/DiversityAndInclusion/DHBOfficers.pdf</a>
<b>People &amp; Culture Business Partners</b>	<a href="https://intranet-vu.edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/BusinessPartnerships/BusinessPartnerClientPortfolios.pdf">https://intranet-vu.edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/BusinessPartnerships/BusinessPartnerClientPortfolios.pdf</a>
<b>Safer Community</b>	<a href="https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/facilities-services/safer-community">https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/facilities-services/safer-community</a>
<b>Staff who Support and Refer Students</b>	<a href="https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/counselling/staff-support-referring-students">https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/counselling/staff-support-referring-students</a>
<b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion Team</b>	<p>Dr Jennifer Sinclair Diversity &amp; Inclusion Manager <a href="mailto:Jennifer.Sinclair@vu.edu.au">Jennifer.Sinclair@vu.edu.au</a></p> <p>Sara Austin Diversity &amp; Inclusion Consultant <a href="mailto:Sara.Austin@vu.edu.au">Sara.Austin@vu.edu.au</a></p> <p>Irene Sazdov Indigenous Employ &amp; Community Liaison Officer <a href="mailto:Irene.Sazdov@vu.edu.au">Irene.Sazdov@vu.edu.au</a></p>
<b>Employee Assistance Program</b>	<a href="https://intranet.vu.edu.au/PC/EmployeeAssistanceProgram.asp">https://intranet.vu.edu.au/PC/EmployeeAssistanceProgram.asp</a>

## APPEARANCE AND DRESS

Social affirmation may involve trying new or different clothing. All staff are supported to dress in a way which best reflects their gender. In the workplace, professional dress standards apply to staff, regardless of gender.

## UPDATING DETAILS

Changing your name, gender, title and other personal details is a major step in a person's gender affirmation journey. Road blocks to achieving these changes can cause distress. We encourage staff to consult the tables below and have all relevant documentation required in order to facilitate these changes in the most effective and efficient way.

### CHANGE OF DETAILS FOR STAFF

Table 3

STAFF			
DETAILS TO BE CHANGED	PROCESS	EVIDENCE REQUIRED	FORMS/CONTACT
Title	Change your existing title to the non-binary title Mx on your employee record. If you wish to also change your gender on your employee record, see information below.	No	Change of Name, Title or Gender form
	Change your existing title to either Mrs / Ms / Miss/ Mr on your employee record.	Yes	
Preferred Name	You can use this prior to legally updating your name. If you wish your preferred name to be changed on your P&C record, complete the Change of Name, Title or Gender form.	No	
Email	If you wish to change your name, including your preferred name on your email, contact IT.	No	<a href="#">ITS helpdesk</a>
Legal Name	Can be changed when a Change of Name Certificate from Births Deaths and Marriages is supplied	Yes	Change of Name, Title or Gender form  <a href="#">Births Deaths &amp; Marriages</a>
Gender	Your gender marker can be amended by completing the Change of Name, Title or Gender form	Yes	Change of Name, Title or Gender form
ID card	If an ID card is required your photo can also be updated. You can update your photo numerous times, as desired.	Yes	VUHQ Service Centres 03 9919 6100 Mon- Fri, 8:30am- 5pm
Parking permit	Personal details on your parking permit can be updated once information is confirmed with P&C	Yes	<a href="mailto:FacilitiesServiceDesk@vu.edu.au">FacilitiesServiceDesk@vu.edu.au</a>
Name badge, desk plate and business cards	New name badges, desk plates and business cards may be requested. A cost code needs to be supplied when the order is placed.	No	Seek approval from your manager and contact procurement <a href="mailto:procurement@vu.edu.au">procurement@vu.edu.au</a>

# INFORMATION FOR MANAGERS OF STAFF AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER

As a first step it is recommended that you read the introductory text in this guide. It may also be helpful to read the section addressed to the staff member affirming their gender. Your Business partner (BP) will be available to assist you with the process, and be available for any questions you may have.

In most cases your staff member will develop a [Gender Affirmation Plan](#) in consultation with you and the BP. The plan is intended as a guide to discuss issues that need to be considered, including timing, communication, education and information for colleagues and team members.

Below is some additional information to be aware of as a manager of a staff member affirming their gender.

## COMMUNICATION

Every gender affirmation plan will be different, and clear, open and honest communication is more likely to prevent misunderstandings, issues or confusion and help resolve any which may arise.

It's recommended that colleagues and other relevant stakeholders attend Gender Affirmation Awareness sessions, to assist understanding and enable better support. It is important that the arrangements and the timing of information sessions be discussed with the staff member affirming their gender. The person affirming their gender may or may not be comfortable with such sessions taking place. Colleagues may be curious and have questions, however it is important to maintain the person's privacy.

Respectful communication should occur to encourage understanding and appropriate support.

If you and the person affirming their gender agree a general communication to colleagues would be appropriate at an agreed time, a sample template is included in the Appendix.

## LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

Reasonable flexibility and access to leave should be available to staff requiring time off in relation to gender affirmation in accordance with existing policies.

This may include leave for:

- Surgery
- Medical appointments
- counselling

If a person requires time off from work, managers should provide relevant information regarding entitlements and the associated documentation required. In addition, staff members may be eligible for special leave in accordance with clause 52 of the Victoria University Enterprise Agreement 2019.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The expectation is that staff affirming their gender will be treated in accordance with the Appropriate Workplace Behaviours policy, that is with courtesy, professionalism and respect. Discriminatory attitudes are not tolerated at Victoria University.

[Confidentiality and privacy](#) should be upheld when dealing with staff and student matters as per university policies. Information should remain confidential and private. Individuals are not required to disclose medical information to their manager / supervisor or the university.

## BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT AND ADDRESSING CONCERNS

Curiosity is natural and people will have questions and pre conceived thoughts about the gender affirmation process. As a manager it is your responsibility to contribute towards building awareness and understanding. Conflict and misunderstandings tend to arise from a general lack of knowledge. If the person affirming their gender is willing, encourage them to assist in the education of their peers, through open conversations and resources where appropriate.

You are encouraged to check in often with the person affirming their gender; assess if they are experiencing any negativity or if there are any tensions arising. It is important that these matters are addressed quickly. Where appropriate, reinforce the difference between personal beliefs and appropriate workplace behaviour. The university [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) can support staff and managers with workplace queries. The support includes a Manager hotline.

It is important to address negative or inappropriate behaviour immediately. If you witness or hear of an individual experiencing inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, as a manager you have a duty of care to report this, and encourage the individual to report this. Examples

of harassment in the context of gender affirmation and non-binary staff may include, and are not limited to, the following:

- Intentionally using incorrect names or pronouns
- 'Outing'
- Deliberate isolation
- Intimidation
- Being physically aggressive
- Hostility
- Destructive gossip
- Online actions which demean
- Belittling or threatening behaviour

*Please note, these behaviours are considered to be harassment whether or not they indicate sexual interest or intent.*

# INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Each person will have their own unique journey in affirming their gender and there isn't a set way to go about navigating through the process. In order to provide support in the best way possible, including personalised support, we encourage students to maintain open and honest communication where relevant. This will allow expectations to be outlined, and will ensure your experience takes place in a respectful and collaborative way.

Open and honest communication is encouraged and our aspiration is for the university to be a place where you can present your true and best self, without fear of discrimination, harassment or bullying. You are leading this process and if you feel you need additional support or guidance along the way, there are people you may contact. (See Table 3 – Key Stakeholders For Students)

## INITIAL DISCUSSIONS

The university is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and encouraging space for students. The goal is for you to feel supported and empowered to have discussions with a [support person](#) about your plans to affirm your gender. If you do not feel comfortable to do this, there are a number of contacts you can access. (See Table 3 – Key Stakeholders For Students)

It is recommended you establish a support team of people you are comfortable with and who are willing to be advocates for you as you navigate university life. The support team could include university community members from the list below.

## DEVELOPING A GENDER AFFIRMATION PLAN

Students affirming their gender may have established support networks and require minimal assistance with navigating university life. A gender affirmation plan can assist with communication and strengthen inclusion between a person affirming their gender, their peers and staff. The Gender Affirmation Plan for Students template is designed to assist

initial conversations and planning towards affirming a person’s gender. The template is intended to be a guide and can be modified as appropriate. The aim of a plan is to reduce the possibility of miscommunication or misunderstandings. The template presents a range of questions which may assist with navigating university procedures, setting targets, contacts and milestones. Having a plan in place helps build relationships and will in turn benefit the university community more broadly.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Having a support network can improve your gender affirmation experience, and may help to ease any distress by knowing you have support around you. It may be of some relief to know that not all the responsibility sits with the person affirming their gender. Some questions you may wish to consider are:

- ◆ How and when you would like to communicate your gender affirmation and plan to key stakeholders.
- ◆ Who would you like present in these conversations? Think about any key ongoing relationships you have. Do you have their contact details; such as email or phone number, or do you have access to a third party who can provide you with support?

Please see the Appendix for a suggested email communication.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR STUDENTS

Table 3

FOR STUDENTS	
<b>Student Support</b>	<a href="https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/welfare">https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/welfare</a> Email: <a href="mailto:student.support@vu.edu.au">student.support@vu.edu.au</a> Phone: +61 3 9919 5400
<b>VUHQ</b>	<a href="https://www.vu.edu.au/contact-us/vuhq-student-service-centres">https://www.vu.edu.au/contact-us/vuhq-student-service-centres</a> +61 3 9919 6100 Monday–Friday, 8.30am–5pm
<b>VU Queer Collective</b>	<a href="https://vustudentunion.com">https://vustudentunion.com</a>
<b>Counselling</b>	<a href="https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/counselling">https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/counselling</a>
<b>Ally Network Contact Officers</b>	<a href="https://intranet-vu-edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/DiversityAndInclusion/AllyNetworkContactOfficers.pdf">https://intranet-vu-edu-au.wallaby.vu.edu.au/PC/PDF/DiversityAndInclusion/AllyNetworkContactOfficers.pdf</a>

**International Student Support** <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/campus-life/advice-support/international-student-support>

**Safer Community** Email: [safer.community@vu.edu.au](mailto:safer.community@vu.edu.au)  
 Phone: +61 3 9919 5707  
[Report online to Safer Community](#)  
[VUSafe mobile app](#)

## CHANGE OF DETAILS FOR STUDENTS

Table 4

STUDENTS			
DETAILS TO BE CHANGED	PROCESS	EVIDENCE REQUIRED	FORMS/CONTACT
<b>Title</b>	Changes can be made to an alternative title of either Mrs / Ms / Miss / Mr or the non-binary title Mx on your student record.	Yes	<a href="#">Personal Details Amendment</a> lodged at VUHQ or online via ASKVU
<b>Preferred Name</b>	You can use this prior to legally updating your name.	Yes	
<b>Name</b>	Your legal name; amendments can be made once evidence is supplied demonstrating that this has been amended through deed poll.	Yes	
<b>Gender</b>	Your gender marker can be amended, including if you are non-binary, on your personal record.	Yes	
<b>Email</b>	An email address will automatically be updated once the above name amendments have been supplied and evidenced.	Yes	
<b>Student ID card</b>	If an ID card is required images will also be updated. You can update your photo numerous times, as desired.	Yes	
<b>Parking permit</b>	The personal details on your parking permit can be updated.	Yes	

# INFORMATION FOR TEACHING STAFF WITH STUDENTS AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER

It is recommended you read the **General Information** section of this Guide for general information about gender affirmation.

For additional information and depth of understanding you may be interested in attending VU's LGBTIQ+ Awareness session contact [allynetwork@vu.edu.au](mailto:allynetwork@vu.edu.au) for more information.

## CREATING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS

University is a safe space for many students. Creating inclusive learning environment is essential and will promote a constructive and positive learning culture. There are a number of ways which teaching staff can promote inclusion for trans and gender diverse students, which will be discussed below.

There may be a time when a student approaches you about seeking support with their gender affirmation journey, this may involve support regarding developing a plan, which covers communication and socialisation with other teaching staff and students, bullying or discrimination, counselling services and special considerations among others. Student Support staff – Senior Advisor Welfare can assist students to develop a Gender Affirmation Plan and other issues as required. The plan will cover aspects such as timing, communication and any educational or awareness training. This will include how and whether the student wishes their gender affirmation to be communicated to class members.

Senior Advisors Welfare liaise with, and advise you and the student's other lecturers about the plan if requested by the student.

Please note the University may or may not be involved in a student's gender affirmation process. This is a personal decision made by the student and not all students will choose to involve the University beyond the requirements to maintain up to date personal details ([Enrolment policy](#) and [procedure](#)). Privacy and consent should be considered when students choose to involve the University. Student information must be handled in a lawful and responsible manner. The VU Privacy Policy and Procedure applies to all staff, students, agents and individuals with whom VU interacts.

## NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Using the name and pronouns preferred by a student can be an easy and important way to ensure inclusion and participation. Normalising pronouns and names can help and you're encouraged to model this by:

- Writing your name and pronouns on the corner of a whiteboard or presentation, be clear and confident if asked why you've done this
- Offer student's to say their pronouns when you first take a roll or attendance list, writing them down can help you refer to them in future- you may like to mention that students can contact you privately about this if they wish, or simply not announce their pronouns if preferred
- Avoid misgendering a student. If you accidentally use the wrong name or pronoun, apologise and move on, without making a scene

## ACADEMIC PROGRESS

A student may need to be absent from or have accommodations made to their studies during the gender affirmation process. Options in relation to Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances are addressed in accordance with existing [VU policies and procedures](#).

This may include leave for:

- Surgery
- Medical appointments
- counselling

If you have a student who has affirmed their gender and are seeking further advice and support on how to respond you can also contact Student Support who will allocate a Senior Advisor – Welfare to be the Support Person for the student. VU has assigned this role to Senior Advisors Welfare.

## DISCRETION AND CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE

Respecting a student's choices is providing support to them.

A student may approach you and disclose their preferred gender and discuss the language they wish for you to use. It's advised that you ask when they'd prefer you to use affirming language (all the time, only in private with them, etc.)

A student may reveal to you that they are trans, however may not be comfortable for their classmates to know, or perhaps are not comfortable with their family knowing. It's important to be sensitive about the information you have and take the student's lead.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The expectation is that students affirming their gender will be treated with courtesy, professionalism and respect. Discriminatory attitudes are not tolerated at Victoria University, regardless of personal views.

[Confidentiality and privacy](#) should be upheld when dealing with student matters as per university policies. Information regarding a student's gender affirmation should remain confidential and private. Students are not required to disclose medical information to the university.

## ADDRESSING NEGATIVITY

While the goal is to ensure a student's gender affirmation journey is positive, supportive and respectful, some may not experience this. You can assist by addressing negative or inappropriate behaviour immediately if and when it arises.

If you witness or hear of an individual experiencing inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, you are encouraged to report it to Safer Community. Encourage the student to do the same or to contact Student Support or Counseling for assistance. Examples of harassment in the context of gender affirmation and non-binary may include, and are not limited to, the following:

- Intentionally using incorrect names or pronouns
- 'Outing'
- Intentionally misgendering a person
- Deliberate isolation
- Intimidation
- Being physically aggressive
- Hostility
- Destructive gossip
- Online actions which demean
- Belittling or threatening behaviour

*Please note, these behaviours are considered to be harassment whether or not they indicate sexual interest or intent.*

# BEING A TRANS ALLY

Being an Ally to the trans and gender diverse community is an important role, and a person's advocacy and support can make a difference to a person's gender affirmation journey.

## WAYS TO BE A TRANS ALLY INCLUDE

- ◆ Speaking up for a trans person by being a vocal advocate, call out disrespectful behaviour, correct inappropriate language and step in and stop harassment. Provide information and resources when opportunities arise.
- ◆ Encouraging the use of correct pronouns. If someone makes a mistake, casually correct it, without making a scene. Allies are encouraged to add their pronouns to email signature, digital names or name badges. Introduce yourself with your name and pronoun at meetings in the classroom or at events.
- ◆ Be patient with someone who is exploring their gender identity- each journey is unique and as a person is discovering what represents their true self, language may change. Be respectful by using the name and pronoun requested.
- ◆ Listen to transgender people with an open mind. Engage with the trans community, follow blogs and listen to podcasts to develop an understanding of the issues and challenges the community face daily. Understanding and support is a major role for allies.
- ◆ Read [Tips for Being a Better Ally to Trans People](#) and for more information visit <https://www.transhub.org.au/allies>

## RESPONDING TO CONCERNS OF OTHERS

Some people may have concerns about a person affirming their gender. These usually stem from a lack of awareness, exposure and knowledge. Some people may be worried they make a mistake or say the wrong thing. These fears should never result in behaviour which is exclusionary, dismissive or discriminatory. Support the person affirming their gender by addressing concerns from their peers, answering questions where you can and guiding people to relevant resources and links to build their knowledge. Be prepared to speak up and shut down discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour and vocalise your support of the trans and gender diverse community.

The university provides an [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) which can support staff and managers with workplace queries. Students agree to follow the Student Charter when they

enrol at VU have access to a range of [support services](#) and student counselling (see table 2 – Key Contacts For Students)

# APPENDIX

## EXAMPLE: COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BROADER ORGANISATION FROM A MANAGER

Good morning/afternoon,

I would like to provide you with some important information about your colleague who you have known as **##old name##**.

From **##date##**, **##enter pronoun##** affirmed gender, and we will be welcoming **##new name##** back into our team.

Therefore it is vital all our employees use **##new name##** and the relevant pronouns of **##enter pronoun##** moving forward. This may take a little practice but **##new name##** has the full support of VU and I trust that you will all show **##pronoun##** the same level of respect as any other colleague. I also stress that VU provides a safe and inclusive work environment for everyone.

We have arranged an information session for **##new name##**'s immediate colleagues and the wider team on **##date##** (which you can sign up for here).

VU is a trans inclusive workplace and there is further information available on the [Diversity & Inclusion intranet page](#): including details of the EAP program for anyone who might need to discuss this further: **###**

## EXAMPLE: COMMUNICATION ABOUT COMING OUT – SUGGESTED WORDING

Coming out is a unique and individual experience for every person. The below text is an idea of what you could say if you're stuck, but it is only a guideline – write or say whatever feels important to you.

### Example 1

Hi,

You're someone that is important to me, and because of that I want to let you know that I am transgender / gender diverse. At the moment coming out to someone feels

like it takes a lot of trust, and I hope you see this as an act of trust, and respect me and my gender by keeping this between us until I am ready to share it more widely.

My name is now \_\_\_\_\_ and my pronouns are \_\_\_\_\_

I am a woman / a man / non-binary, but I'm also the same friend / (other relationship term) I've always been, and I would love for that to continue.

If you want to learn more about what this is like for me, you can check out [transhub.org/allies](https://transhub.org/allies) for information and resources.

[Your name]

## **Example 2**

Hey everyone,

This is a post to tell you something really cool and exciting about me - I am transgender / gender diverse. It would mean a lot to me that you read a bit about what that means, and ways you can support me.

My name is now \_\_\_\_\_ and my pronouns are \_\_\_\_\_

I am a woman / a man / non-binary, but I'm also the same person I've always been, and I would love for our friendships to continue.

If you want to learn more, you can check out [transhub.org/allies](https://transhub.org/allies) for information and resources.

[Your name]