


From trans awareness to trans advocacy in the schools of Performance and Cultural Industries (PCI) and Music



This document was created collaboratively by students and staff across the school of PCI and the school of Music, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures, University of Leeds

Who is this guide for?

This is a guide for anyone who is a student, a member of staff or a visiting professional (lecturer, industry specialist, artist, etc.) within the schools of PCI and Music.

How should this guide be used?

The material within this guide is designed to offer simple information and practical advice for all people in our schools to be trans aware, to be respectful of people's identities and for us all to ensure the safety and respect of trans people. It is primarily aimed at people who are cis-gendered to aid their understanding of trans justice, and to offer support for people within our schools who may be considering transition and exploring their gender themselves. Trans people might also find some of the resources useful for navigating life and study at the University of Leeds.



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This guide is not policy, it has been designed as a supportive and educational tool. Its content follows the University of Leeds policy on dignity and mutual respect.

What is 'transgender' and how does this relate to a person's sex?

Even before you are born, you are assigned a sex, which is based on the dominant genitalia and other biological indicators your body has (some people have both the typical genital forms). These are grouped and categorised as a binary sex. But sex is not as simple as being either 'female' or 'male'. There are several biological processes that occur within the body which means that the categorising of a person as having one absolute identity that fits within the 'female' or 'male' binary is a social construct rather than a reality.

Gender is the self-made identity we present as we move through the world. We do this through performances of self (behaviour, clothing, speech, etc.). Sometimes the gender we feel is comfortable or 'normal' for us to present aligns with the sex we were assigned at birth (female = woman / male = man). This kind of person is referred to as 'cis-gendered'. For some people, the gender that we feel is comfortable or 'normal' to present does not align with the sex we were assigned at birth. This is referred to as being 'transgendered'.

Your gender identity

Going through transition can happen at any time and it can be difficult for people to disclose their gender to others. If you are a cis-gender person, you can help by using pronouns and being an ally for trans people. If you are a trans student or a student who is exploring their gender, and you would like support, the Leeds University Union have an LGBTQ+ society and there is also a Queer/Trans/Intersex People of Colour (QTIPOC) society. If you are a member of staff who is trans or exploring your gender, there is an LGBT+ staff society.

Being trans and/or exploring your gender can impact your life significantly, for better or worse, in many ways. Being kind, compassionate and patient can make a big difference to anyone.

Some people transition socially and legally (although nonbinary as a category is not currently recognised in law), and others may also choose medical transition. There can be many reasons why this might be. Currently, there are many barriers to accessing medical support for transition (including psychosocial support such as talking therapies). Current pathways provided by the NHS for accessing trans affirming healthcare in the UK to support a medical transition have long waiting times and some expect individuals to identify with a binary gender e.g., Male or Female. For many trans people, this does not reflect their experience of gender.



Understanding pronouns

Pronouns are words that are used to refer to a person instead of using their name. In the English language and in many other languages, these pronouns are gendered. For example, 'she' or 'he', which means they tell us something about the gender identity of the person they refer to. Historically, a person's pronouns have been defined by the sex they were assigned at birth (female/male), but in recent decades, and because of advancement in our understanding of sex and gender identities, it is important to recognise that a person's gender may not be apparent from the way they look, or what they are called. Equally, gender categories have expanded beyond the binary of she/he. Some people do not identify as a woman or a man; this is often referred to as being non-binary. The most common three pronouns in English are 'she', 'he' and 'they'.

Some people use 'neo pronouns' - these look and sound completely different to the typical pronouns used in English (she/he/they). Some examples of neo pronouns include: Xe/Xem/Xyr (pronounced: zee/zem/zeyr), or Ne/Nem/Nir (pronounced: knee/nem/near). There are many neo pronouns that exist and it is often easy to look them up on the internet, if you are unsure how to use them, or pronounce them. If you'd like to know more about neopronouns see info on the Mermaids website: <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/news/neopronouns-101/>

Some people may use pronouns in a language other than English. It is respectful and supportive to use whatever pronouns a person prefers for themselves.

Challenges faced by trans people

Trans people face profound discrimination, violence and exclusion within British society. According to a report by the LGBT charity, Stonewall, and government agency, YouGov, who surveyed more than 800 trans and non-binary people, 41% of trans people had experienced a hate crime within the last 12 months, 25% of trans people have experienced homelessness, and 40% of trans people adjust the way they dress because of fear of discrimination or harassment (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018). Additionally, trans people face many inequalities in access to supportive education (Burns, et al. 2016). The Stonewall and YouGov report also highlights that 36% of trans students in higher education have experienced negative comments or behaviour from staff (Ibid).

Trans justice is part of decolonising

Research in the fields of genealogy and gender studies has identified non-binary gender practices, and expanded forms of kinship within indigenous communities in Africa, North America and Australia, and others (O'Sullivan, 2021; Pallota-Chiarolli, 2020; Epprecht & Egya, 2011). Researchers suggest that gender binaries were imposed on indigenous communities by colonial powers asserting Western religious gender constructions as a way to enforce Western family networks and reproductive practice.



Practical allyship - what you can do

- **Don't make assumptions about a person's gender**

If you don't know a person's pronouns, you can always ask. In small group and 1-2-1 scenarios this might be OK, but be mindful that some people might not feel comfortable to speak their pronouns out loud to you or in a group where they do not know how this will be received (and where they can't be sure they are safe). If you are a cis-gender person, one way you can support this is to use pronouns yourself. You can introduce yourself with your pronouns and you can put them on your email signature, or next to your name during video calls.

Also, a person's pronouns can change over time. We are always changing and developing as people. It's good to be mindful of that, and supportive of people's identities as they shift.

- **Be a reflexive practitioner**

Think about the way you and your peers interact with others in individual and group settings. Reflect on any challenges, concerns and uncertainties you have and seek out information (either through organisations/charities or research) to help you to process and develop a better understanding. The schools of PCI and Music are learning spaces, they are not for shaming and blaming others. If you are a cis-gender person, be mindful that it's not the responsibility of someone who is trans to educate you on these topics. The internet has a wealth of resources you can access, and you can also discuss topics with other cis-gender peers if you learn best in that way.

- **Think about gendered language**

When addressing groups consider using gender-inclusive language like 'everyone' or 'people' instead of 'guys'.

Some published texts, particularly older sources, might use 'he/him' to refer to people in general. It's not always possible to use inclusive texts, but you can raise a discussion about the use of gendered language with your group and make it clear that this is not regarded as acceptable or current practice.

- **Support and report**

You can use the information in this guide to be supportive of trans people and to actively confront or report trans-phobic incidents.

Glossary

Correct terminologies change over time so your best bet is to model language use on what people use for themselves, noting that not everyone chooses to use the same language. This can be very complex terrain so be patient with yourself and keep learning to support your friends, students, colleagues. There's no need to get tangled up, just remain open to learning.

Transgender: living/presenting externally as the gender one wants to be seen and understood as, beyond the sex assigned at birth.

Non-binary: associating identity beyond the binary, so although aligned with trans, non-binary people want to choose how to present and identify. This choice might shift over time, or it might be consistent.

Gender identity: (inward) a psychosocial understanding of one's deepest sense of self as being or belonging to a group identification (eg: trans women are women). We should avoid making assumptions and listen to how folks identify themselves.

Gender presentation: (outward) this is more descriptive and perhaps about appearances – usually used as adjectives that describe how we like to present/ dress/ express. While gender expression is often visible, it is not necessarily an indicator of a person's identity. The only way to know a person's gender is if they tell you. We suggest decoupling from sex-based identifications such as 'masculine' for those who like trousers and waistcoats to more descriptive 'dapper/ butch'. This doesn't have to 'match' what gender identity people have [eg, one can be a femme (gender presentation) non-binary person]]

Gender euphoria: the joy and pleasure of being recognised and affirmed in one's own identity.

Gender dysphoria: painful sense of incongruence and sometimes associated with anxiety/ depression. If people experience this there can be social withdrawal and difficulties building confidence.

Cis / cisgender: meaning one continues to identify with the sex assigned at birth, and not a slur.

Glossary (cont'd)

Pronouns: these are words that identify gender identities such as he/him, they/them or she/her. Some people use interchangeable ones, meaning they don't mind which, but you can always ask or try and be sure to mix it up if that's the case (eg: he/they, don't just default to 'he'). We can normalise not assuming what pronouns people use by noting that we can ask, or modelling that we can be corrected without shame/ blame.

Neopronouns: pronouns can be a place of experimentation and neopronouns are for those exploring different ones

Deadnaming: Many trans people take on a new name that is different from the one they were assigned at birth. Deadnaming is using a person's former name instead of their new one.

Mis-gendering: using the wrong pronouns in conversation with or about a trans person. For example, referring to a person as 'she' when they use the pronoun 'they'. The best way to overcome this is to say, 'I'm sorry, I meant [they/he/him/xem/etc]' and carry on.

Allyship/being an ally: an ally in the context of trans- and non-binary justice is someone that is cisgendered and who supports and respects trans and non-binary people. An ally is someone who advocates for trans people, helps to ensure the safety and respect of trans people, and who actively challenges transphobia. Allies can play a solidarity role in trans justice, but it's important that allies recognise the power and privilege they have as cis people. Allies are able to listen to the needs of trans people and help to create safe spaces for trans and non-binary gender expression in all its forms. Allies do not determine the actions and behaviours of trans justice, they respond to the often shifting needs and policies coming from trans activists, and help to achieve them.

Frequently Asked Questions

"Why should I state my pronouns in meetings or put them in my email signature?"

Telling people what your pronouns are, using your pronouns in email signatures, and putting your pronouns next to your name during video calls helps to communicate with others that you do not assume another person's gender. This is not just for people who are transgender to disclose. It's just as important to contribute to this practice if you're cis-gendered or you think that 'it's obvious' what gender you are. There is no way to tell what a person's gender is purely by how they look or what their name is. By using pronouns you can contribute to a safer space for trans people.

"What are examples of transphobia?"

It is not always simple to recognise transphobia, but it typically includes:

- attempting to remove trans people's rights
- misrepresenting trans people
- abuse (including deliberate misgendering, ostracism and expecting trans people to contribute to "debates" about their right to exist, amongst other things)

More information on these and other forms of transphobia, are available on the TransActual website: <https://www.transactual.org.uk/transphobia>

"What should I do if I witness or experience transphobia?"

We can't always protect trans people from harm, but we can take measures to reduce harm in the future. If you are a practising ally and feel safe to do so, you can directly challenge or confront transphobic behaviour to ensure the safety of trans people who are experiencing abuse. Incidents of transphobia should be reported:

- If you are a student in an educational setting, the incident should be reported to your tutor or module leader, or to the programme leader of your course, in the first instance.
- If you are a member of staff, incidents should be reported to your line manager in the first instance.
- If you are a visiting professional, incidents should be reported to the member of staff who has employed you, in the first instance.

The schools of PCI and Music are working to develop a reporting process with managers and this information will be updated in due course.

Frequently Asked Questions (cont'd)

“What is not OK to ask a trans person?”

It's not OK to ask invasive and personal questions to trans-people. You wouldn't typically ask someone about their genitals or their medical history, and you wouldn't ask a cis-gendered person questions like: “When did you know you were cisgender?”, “You're straight? How did you tell your parents?” Because it's considered rude and strange. You should use the same social etiquette and respect for trans people. Have a read of this Insider article for more information on phrases you may not have considered are transphobic:

<https://www.insider.com/phrases-you-should-never-say-to-transgender-people-2020-11#biologically-female-or-biologically-male-1>

“What should I do if I misgender or deadname someone?”

If you accidentally misgender someone, you can pause and say, ‘sorry, I meant [insert correct gender pronoun]’ and then carry on with whatever you were saying. It's important to keep your apology brief, so as not to centre yourself and your mistake.

If someone else calls you out on misgendering or deadnaming, try to avoid being defensive. We all get things wrong sometimes. We're all learning. When you make a mistake, accept it. Say sorry and move on.

“What should I do if someone else misgenders someone?”

If you notice during conversation that someone else has misgendered another person it's courteous and respectful to interrupt and say ‘excuse me - [person being misgendered] uses [insert correct terms] pronouns’. Even if the person being misgendered is not present, it's good practice to do this. You can use the same process if you or someone else deadnames a person.

Resources and Support

Meg-John Barker 'Gender Zine: A companion workbook' Available for free download <https://www.rewriting-the-rules.com/zines/#1507546130166-365b50ff-00db>

Christine Burns MBE bookshelf: <https://uk.bookshop.org/shop/christineburns>

Gender Identity Research Education Society (2022) Resources
<https://www.gires.org.uk/resources/terminology/>

Gendered Intelligence (UK) website is available here:
<https://genderedintelligence.co.uk/>

Alex Iantaffi and Meg-John Barker (2019) *Life isn't binary: Of being both, beyond, and in-between*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Alex Iantaffi and Meg-John Barker (2017) *How to Understand your Gender: A Practical Guide for Exploring Who You are*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Keenan, H. B. (2017) *Unscripting Curriculum: Toward a Critical Trans Pedagogy*. Harvard Educational Review. 87(4).
<https://www.hepg.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-87-number-4/herarticle/unscripting-curriculum>

Spence Messih and Archie Barry's *Clear Expectations*, is a set of guidelines aimed at institutions, galleries, and curators working with trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists: <https://visualarts.net.au/guides/2019/clear-expectations/>

TransLeeds are a city-wide organisation and advocacy group for trans identifying people: <https://transleeds.org/>

Trevor Project (US): *Guide to being an ally to trans and non-binary youth*

The University has compiled a list of resources from the organisation Gendered Intelligence, which can be accessed here: <https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/news/trans-awareness-resources/>

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Epprecht, Marc & Egya, Sule E. (2011). "Teaching about homosexualities to Nigerian university students: a report from the field". *Gender and Education* (23)4, 367-383.

O'Sullivan, Sandy. (2021). "The Colonial Project of Gender (and Everything Else)". *Genealogy* 5 (67). <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5030067>

Pallota-Chiarolli, Maria. (2020). 'Pre-colonial Actualities, post-colonial amnesia and neo-colonial assemblage' in Ana Cristina Santos, Chiara Bertone, Ryan Thoreson, Saskia E. Wieringa, and Zowie Davy (eds.). *The Sage Handbook of Global Sexualities*. Newbury Park: Sage Publishing.

How this guide was developed and compiled

This content of this guide was sketched in a workshop held between staff and students across the schools of PCI and Music. The group included cis and trans gender people. The workshop was facilitated by academic colleagues, Dani Abulhawa (she/her), ally Walsh (she/her) and Jon Price (he/him).

The main points to be included in the guide were then expanded upon and structured by the team of participants involved in the workshop. A draft document was compiled and circulated to the group for further feedback before being presented to the Heads of Department for both schools, and to the LGBTQ+ staff group, whose responses also fed into the final edit.

The three colleagues leading this project - Dani Abulhawa, ally Walsh and Jon Price - are cis-gender people, committed to practising allyship and activism for LGBTQI+ people within their respective fields.