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# Gender Affirmation – Support and Resources for Staff

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

UOW recognises the strength that a diverse and inclusive workplace brings to the organisation and is supportive of students and staff at any stage of their gender affirmation.

This resource aims to provide guidance and clarity around affirming your gender at the University of Wollongong. As gender affirmation looks different to every person, this resource has been designed to provide general guidance from which you can build out a tailored plan that works best for your needs.

## 2. ABOUT GENDER AFFIRMATION

A person's sex and gender may not necessarily be the same. For instance, an individual's gender may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. Some people may choose to transition from the gender they were assigned at birth to affirm their gender to one that reflects their true self. This is referred to as gender affirmation.

Gender Affirmation may include the following:

- **Social affirmation** – changing name and pronouns, and/or presentation
- **Medical affirmation** – taking gender affirming hormones and/or having surgery
- **Legal affirmation** – changing legal gender marker and/or name on official and government forms of ID

There are many ways a person can affirm gender. What gender affirmation looks like for each trans and gender diverse person is unique and based on what is personally affirming, what feels safe to do, and what is accessible and available. Not everyone will take all (or any) of these steps, or take them in this order, and the timing of gender affirmation will vary from person to person.

## 3. INFORMATION FOR STAFF AFFIRMING THEIR GENDER

UOW recognises that everyone's gender affirmation journey is unique and will involve different steps and timelines for each individual. It is important that as the person being impacted by gender affirmation, you drive the process. You are responsible for seeking assistance and support, and determining what, when and to whom you share personal information. The below recommendations will guide you through this process and give you an understanding of employment related obligations at UOW.

### 1. PRIVACY

There is no legal requirement for you to inform management or anyone else in your workplace or school/research unit of your intention to affirm your gender. Should you choose to disclose this, any personal information about your gender affirmation and/or



gender identity will be treated as sensitive information and will be kept confidential. This information will only be used and disclosed with your knowledge and consent.

## 2. INITIAL CONVERSATIONS

Once you are ready to discuss your gender affirmation plans, set up a time to speak with your line manager. It is ideal for your immediate line manager to be your primary contact through your gender affirmation, however you may prefer to deal directly with your People & Culture (P&C) Business Partner or other members of the management team.

You may invite any support people you would like to be present in these conversations. Consider bringing a friend, colleague, Diversity & Inclusion team member or P&C Business Partner along to the initial meeting with your manager for support.

As early as you feel comfortable, share any necessary information to ensure you are supported during your gender affirmation. This provides an opportunity for your manager to ask questions about how they can best support you in the workplace.

Here are some things you might discuss during initial conversations:

- What steps you will be taking, and when
- How you would like these changes communicated to colleagues and other stakeholders, including external stakeholders (if applicable)
- Any new uniforms required (if applicable)
- Any leave that may be required
- The kinds of supports you will require

To assist with initiating conversations, you may wish to refer to the Communication Templates resource in the Appendix.

## 3. GENDER AFFIRMATION PLAN

Affirming your gender in the workplace can require the involvement of multiple people, teams, and processes. Many employees and their managers find it useful to have a plan and/or checklist of steps to outline tasks, set timeframes, and work out responsibilities so that expectations and obligations are clearly managed. This is known as a Gender Affirmation Plan and is optional but highly encouraged to ensure you receive the best support possible. You may choose to complete your Gender Affirmation Plan individually, with your manager, or with a support person.

Your Gender Affirmation Plan may include:

- communication processes to inform colleagues and key staff
- processes to change personal details on UOW systems



- approximate timeline of affirmation processes
- confirmation of available support

Considerations:

- When developing your plan, consider how confidential you would like this process to be, particularly as it may involve multiple teams across the organisation. Communicate this with your manager.
- If you choose not to complete a Gender Affirmation Plan, we recommend that you still refer to the document to inform the University of any required amendments to employment records resulting from gender affirmation.
- The Gender Affirmation Plan should be used as a flexible tool and can be modified as needed to suit your unique experience. No two plans will look the same.

Once a Gender Affirmation Plan has been developed, and with your consent, your manager will liaise with the Diversity and Inclusion Team and/or People & Culture Business Partnering Team to seek feedback on the agreed actions.

A template for the UOW Gender Affirmation Plan can be found in the Appendix of this Guide.

#### 4. SUPPORT OPTIONS

##### a) People & Culture Business Partnering Team

Each Division and Faculty has a dedicated P&C Business Partner who can assist and/or accompany you during initial conversations with your manager and/or speak to your manager on your behalf and with your approval. P&C Business Partners can also assist with record updates and planned leave. [Find your designated P&C contact on the Universe webpage.](#)

##### b) UOW Ally Network

UOW's Ally network is a group of staff and students who help support and advocate for our gender, sex and sexuality diverse community. Allies are informed, caring people who provide a safe and respectful environment for people to raise issues, ask questions and share information. Note: Allies are not experts about matters of sex, sexuality and gender identity and some Allies may not necessarily have experience with gender affirmation.

[Visit this link to join the Ally network or to access the list of UOW Allies.](#)

##### c) Colleagues

You may prefer to reach out to a trusted colleague for support. A colleague may be able to guide you through your gender affirmation planning and/or accompany you to meetings with your manager. Please note some colleagues may have little to no awareness or education in relation to gender, sex and sexuality diverse matters.



**d) UOW EAP**

UOW's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free and confidential counselling service for all UOW staff and their immediate family members where clinicians are trained in gender, sex and sexuality issues. The EAP is provided by an external organisation, TELUS Health, which operates independently of the university and no information will be disclosed without your permission. Visit this link for [more information and to book an appointment](#).

**e) Pride in Diversity**

You can also contact UOW's external workplace LGBTQ inclusion partner program, Pride in Diversity, to facilitate the initial discussions within your workplace. To get in touch, please contact the [Diversity & Inclusion Team](#).

**5. CHANGING YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS**

The gender affirmation process may involve changing personal details such as your name and/or title to align with your affirmed gender. Please view the UOW Gender Affirmation Plan (template) in the Appendix for information on how to change your personal details at UOW and for an outline of associated evidence requirements.

**6. ACCESSING CAMPUS FACILITIES**

You may use the toilets and change rooms which align with your gender identity, or those which you feel most safe in, at any stage of your gender affirmation. [A list of all gender bathrooms can be found here](#).

**7. BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT**

Every employee has a right to feel safe, valued, and respected in the workplace. If you are experiencing discrimination, harassment, or bullying, refer to the [UOW Gender Identity and Affirmation Guideline](#) and the [UOW Grievance Policy](#) for information on next steps.

Complaints can be formally lodged through the [UOW Complaints Management Centre](#).

**4. INFORMATION FOR MANAGEMENT**

Management and leadership teams all play an important role in supporting employees who are affirming their gender at work. It is important that managers are educated about broad experiences of gender, and issues that trans employees face in the workplace. If an individual approaches you with the intention of affirming their gender, your support is critical. Below are some of the key ways you can provide assistance.



## 1. BE AN ALLY

- Educate yourself on gender, sex, and sexuality diversity issues. Ensure information and support is available to team members. See Appendix for self-education resources.
- Model respectful behaviour
- Always use the correct name and pronouns, even when the employee is not present
- Do not ask invasive or unnecessary questions
- Do not discuss the employee's personal information without their direct consent
- Let colleagues know the appropriate people to direct questions to (such as yourself)
- Make sure communications and procedures are inclusive
- Address any negative behaviour from colleagues immediately

## 2. PROVIDE ACTIVE SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENT CONSULTATION

When you become aware of an individual who intends to affirm their gender, it is imperative you are supportive, open-minded and honest. It is important to respect the agency of employees affirming their gender, and to let them guide what they want this process to look like in the workplace. Be prepared to discuss their aims and expectations, and ask what they want your role to be throughout the process.

The purpose of these discussions is to:

- Understand how the staff member may be impacted at work and identify what support they will need
- Develop a plan and appropriate action items to have the staff member's gender recognised at work
- Check in on the staff member's wellbeing and identify any challenges that may arise

There are several considerations that need attention at this stage:

- Provide a safe, private space to hold your initial discussions, and encourage the person affirming their gender to bring a support person to the discussions.
- Offer assurance – make it clear your conversations are private and confidential and that you are there to support the staff member at all times.
- Understand the staff member is likely to be feeling vulnerable and uncertain about how their gender affirmation will impact on their working relationships – be calm and respectful in your discussions.
- Ask for suggestions on what you can do to help and discuss how you can assist them during their affirmation.



- Ask them if they are considering a name change. If yes, ask what name and pronoun the individual would prefer and when the individual will want you to begin referring to them using the new name and/or pronoun.
- Ensure the staff member affirming their gender is leading the process. It is essential that their goals, preferences, and concerns are central in conversations.
- Remember, consultation should be an ongoing process and regular check-ins provide the staff member with opportunities to voice any concerns or changes. You can suggest scheduling regular check-ins, these can be with yourself or their preferred staff member/ support person, and can be held as often as the employee feels is required (e.g. monthly, fortnightly).

### **3. SUGGEST A GENDER AFFIRMATION PLAN**

Gender affirmation in the workplace may involve many processes and changes to systems, and require the involvement of management, People & Culture staff, and IT teams. Developing a workplace gender affirmation plan and/or checklist can be useful for managing the various actions required, delineating responsibilities, and setting expectations.

You can encourage the staff member to use a Gender Affirmation Plan, noting the following:

- You can ask the staff member whether they would like to develop their plan in consultation with you, however they may prefer to do this independently or with a support person.
- All information shared by the staff member affirming their gender is given in confidence and may only be shared with their permission.
- The Gender Affirmation Plan should be used as a flexible tool and can be modified as needed to suit the experience of the person affirming their gender.
- The staff member may choose to not have a plan, or not to share their plan.

The following areas are likely to be included in a Gender Affirmation Plan:

- communication processes to inform colleagues and key staff
- processes to change personal details on UOW systems
- approximate timeline of affirmation processes
- changes to work arrangements and leave

A template for the UOW Gender Affirmation Plan can be found in the Appendix of this Guide.



#### 4. PLAN HOW TO COMMUNICATE CHANGES TO STAFF

At some point in the gender affirmation process, colleagues may become aware of the employee's gender affirmation. It is important to have open conversations with the employee to develop a communications strategy for how people will be informed and what information they are to be given.

Communication will be different in all workplace plans and dialogue can help alleviate any potential difficulties or issues.

The employee may want to:

- personally inform all colleagues of their gender affirmation;
- personally inform some close colleagues whilst their manager and/or P&C representative informs the rest of the team;
- have their manager and/or P&C representative inform colleagues (for your assistance, please see example communication in the Appendix).

In the case that the employee's manager and/or P&C representative is to inform colleagues about their gender affirmation, it is important to have a record of the employee's consent to disclose that information, and to keep the employee's privacy and confidentiality at the forefront of your mind. Colleagues may be informed through multiple means such as a confidential email or a scheduled meeting with the employee's team.

Respectful communications that are created with involvement from all parties is essential. It is natural for colleagues to be curious; however, most information about gender affirmation may be provided without disclosing the individual's personal information. If colleagues express curiosity about the individual's personal circumstances, or would like further questions answered (i.e., expectations of their behaviour), then you must discuss this with the person affirming their gender and not disclose any personal information without their express consent.

#### 5. SEEK SUPPORT

As a manager, you can receive advice from the [Diversity & Inclusion Team](#) and your P&C Business Partner ([find your designated P&C contact on the Universe webpage](#)) to assist you to better understand the gender affirmation process at UOW and guide your staff member. As a starting point, ensure you are familiar with this resource, your legal responsibilities and the content within a Gender Affirmation Plan.

You can also seek advice from our external workplace LGBTQ inclusion partner, Pride in Diversity. To get in touch, please contact the [Diversity & Inclusion Team](#).

#### 6. PROMOTING EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

One of the most important ways to support your employee is to take an entire workplace approach to promoting inclusivity and providing education around gender, sex, and sexuality diversity issues. This might involve any or all of the following:





- Providing general workplace training to team members on gender affirmation. This is a good opportunity to prepare colleagues, build empathy and allow them to ask questions safely without making it specifically about the person who is affirming their gender. Contact the [Diversity & Inclusion Team](#) to organise training for staff teams through UOW's partner program 'Pride in Diversity'.
- Resources on diversity and inclusion should also be made readily accessible to employees. You can refer to the Appendix for helpful self-resources.
- [Encourage staff to join UOW's Ally network](#). Allies help support and advocate for our gender, sex and sexuality diverse community and provide a safe and respectful environment for people to raise issues, ask questions and share information. Note: Allies are not experts about matters of sex, sexuality and gender identity and some Allies may not necessarily have experience with gender affirmation.

## 7. BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

While it is understandable that some colleagues may have questions and concerns about what it means when another employee affirms their gender, this is no excuse for discrimination, harassment, and bullying. Negative and discriminatory behaviour must be addressed immediately. Refer to the [UOW Gender Identity and Affirmation Guideline](#) and the [UOW Grievance Policy](#) for further advice.

Complaints can be formally lodged through the [UOW Complaints Management Centre](#).

## 5. INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE & CULTURE (P&C) STAFF

People & Culture (P&C) Business Partners may be asked to provide support and guidance to a staff member affirming their gender. Some staff members affirming their gender may not feel comfortable approaching a manager and may contact you in the first instance, or at different times throughout their gender affirmation.

If an individual approaches you with the intention of affirming their gender, below are some of the critical pieces of information you will need to know.

### 1. PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE STAFF MEMBER

- Listen carefully and be sensitive as you would to any other staff member. Understand the staff member may be feeling vulnerable and uncertain about how their gender affirmation will impact on their working relationships.
- If this is new for you, let the staff member know that you will need some time to read through this resource and consult the Diversity & Inclusion team to learn the process required.
- Every gender affirmation process is unique and should be person-centred, driven by the staff member. It is essential that their goals, preferences, and concerns are central in conversations.



- Offer assurance – make it clear your conversations are always private and confidential and that you are there to support the staff member at all times.
- Encourage staff to speak with their manager only when they feel ready and if they are comfortable doing so. You can offer to accompany them to meetings or offer to speak to their manager, with their permission, on their behalf.

## 2. BE INFORMED AND SEEK GUIDANCE

### a) Diversity and Inclusion team

The [Diversity & Inclusion team](#) can answer questions on gender affirmation in the workplace and point you towards resources to help further your understanding and capacity to support staff.

### b) UOW's partner program 'Pride in Diversity'

You can contact UOW's external workplace LGBTQ inclusion partner program, Pride in Diversity, to facilitate the initial discussions and/or seek guidance on how to best support the staff member during their gender affirmation. Pride in Diversity may also be able to deliver information sessions on gender affirmation to P&C teams. To get in touch, please contact the [Diversity & Inclusion team](#).

### c) Gender Affirmation Plan

Familiarise yourself with this resource and the Gender Affirmation Plan. This will provide you with key information on what the support process may look like and help you understand the university's requirements. Please note that it is not a requirement for staff affirming their gender to complete a Gender Affirmation Plan, and as the experience is unique for each individual, no two plans will look the same.

### d) University Policies

P&C Business Partners should familiarise themselves with relevant university policies to ensure they are informed and up to date with university requirements. Please refer to 'Relevant Policies' in section 8 of this resource.

## 3. ASSIST WITH UPDATES OF UNIVERSITY RECORDS AND PERSONAL DETAILS

The gender affirmation process may involve the staff member requesting to change their personal details such as name and/or title to align with their affirmed gender. Please view the UOW Gender Affirmation Plan (template) in the Appendix for information on how to change your personal details at UOW and for an outline of associated evidence requirements.

As a P&C Business Partner, you are responsible for assisting staff wanting to update their records.



## 6. INFORMATION FOR COLLEAGUES

If you have a colleague who is affirming their gender, your assistance and allyship can help them feel safe and supported through their gender affirmation journey.

Your colleague may ask you to help with any or all of the following:

- Be a support person and accompany them to initial meetings with their manager or P&C Business Partner.
- Assist them with their Gender Affirmation Plan
- Provide general support and assurance throughout their gender affirmation

### 1. PROVIDE SUPPORT

- When a colleague approaches you for support, it is imperative you are open minded and sensitive. Be prepared to discuss their aims and expectations and ask what they want your role to be throughout the process.
- Offer assurance – make it clear your conversations are always private and confidential and that you are there to provide support. Your colleague may be feeling vulnerable and uncertain about how their gender affirmation will impact their working relationships, so communicating this is important.
- If you are uncertain about gender affirmation and/or related processes at UOW, this is ok, let your colleague know and ask for some time to learn.
- If you are their first point of contact, refer them to this document and suggest they develop a Gender Affirmation Plan (optional) as a first step. You can assist with this as far as you feel comfortable. A Gender Affirmation Plan Template is available in the Appendix.
- Ask your colleague how often they would like to meet. Having regular ‘check ins’ can be both helpful and reassuring.

### 2. SEEK SUPPORT AND SELF-EDUCATION RESOURCES

If a colleague has reached out to you for assistance, you may have limited knowledge and experience with gender affirmation and may not feel ready to fully support your colleague. This is ok and we encourage staff to seek resources and advice to further their knowledge about gender affirmation.

#### a) Diversity and Inclusion Team (People & Culture)

The [Diversity and Inclusion team](#) can assist you with questions on gender affirmation and can refer you to further resources on gender affirmation as well as gender, sex, and sexuality diversity issues.

#### b) People & Culture (P&C) Business Partners



P&C Business Partners can provide advice and guidance on employment-related issues such as leave entitlements, facilitating access to resources and updating employment records and personal details. Each Division and Faculty has a dedicated P&C Business Partner. [Find your designated P&C contact on the Universe webpage.](#)

**c) UOW Ally Network**

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**d) UOW EAP**

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## 8. BE AN ALLY

- Educate yourself on gender, sex, and sexuality diversity issues. See Appendix for self-education resources.
- Respect your colleague by consistently using their affirmed name and pronouns, even if they are different to the name or pronouns you've used for them before. If you make a mistake, don't make a big deal about it. Just apologise, move on, and get it right next time. Refer to the Appendix for resources on pronouns.
- Model respectful behaviour
  - Share your pronouns – in your email signature, Zoom and Webex profile, LinkedIn, Moodle site
  - Practice using gender inclusive language. See Inclusive Language Guidelines and resources in Appendix.
  - Show your support by displaying LGBTQ-inclusive material in your office and/or classroom
- Use caution when asking questions about the person's gender affirmation or identity. Many topics are not appropriate to raise in conversation, and they include:
  - the person's anatomy or body, including genitals, internal organs, or other characteristics;
  - whether the person has or intends to have surgery;
  - whether the person is on gender affirming hormones;



- the person's sexuality (sexuality is not relevant to gender).
- Do not discuss the employee's personal information without their direct consent
- Call out inappropriate behaviour from colleagues immediately (jokes, intentionally using incorrect pronouns or name, bullying, etc). If you do not feel comfortable addressing this directly, speak with your supervisor, manager or P&C Business Partner. No-one should feel disrespected and sometimes it can be your voice that makes the change.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the following organisations in the development of this resource: ACON's Pride in Diversity program, TransHub, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland and Victoria University.

## 8. RELEVANT POLICIES

This document is intended to be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- [UOW Gender Identity and Affirmation Guideline](#)
- [UOW Grievance Policy](#)
- [Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)
- [UOW Code of Conduct](#) (which includes statement on dress code)
- [UOW Enterprise Agreement](#) (check for leave entitlements)
- [Flexible Work Arrangements](#)

## 9. APPENDIX AND FURTHER RESOURCES

### Communication templates

- [Sample communication to managers and work teams](#)

### Self-education resources

- [TransHub](#)
- [Names and "deadnaming"](#)
- [Pronouns](#)

### Supplementary material

- [UOW Gender Affirmation Plan](#) (template)

## 10. FEEDBACK

If you would like to provide feedback on this document, please contact the [Diversity and Inclusion team](#).

