

## **BRIEFING NOTE 6 – GLOSSARY OF TRANSGENDER TERMS**

The following list sourced from the Equality Challenge Unit<sup>1</sup> provides an explanation of some terms used which relate to transgender. The University is aware that terminology changes and the list below is here to be of help to individuals.

### **FtM**

Female to male trans. A person who is changing, or has changed, gender from female to male.

### **Gender**

Expressed in terms of masculinity or femininity, gender describes how people feel about themselves and how they expect other people to behave towards them. The overwhelming majority of the population has a gender that accords with their anatomical sex, which is why it is sometimes difficult to understand that the two are different. Gender is less clearly defined than anatomical sex, and does not necessarily represent a simple binary choice: some people have a gender identity that is neither clearly female nor clearly male. Gender consists of two related aspects: gender identity, which is the person's internal perception and experience of their gender; and gender role, which is the way that the person lives in society and interacts with others, based on their gender identity. It should be noted, however, that for the purposes of the law, gender is binary – people can only be male or female.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: the Equality Challenge Unit's publication "Employing Transsexual People in Higher Education" [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

## **Gender Dysphoria**

A person with gender dysphoria can experience anxiety, uncertainty, or persistently uncomfortable feelings about their birth gender. They may feel that they have a gender identity that is different from their anatomical sex. This in turn may lead to a fear of expressing their feelings and a fear of rejection, which may lead to deep anxiety, leading to chronic depression and possibly attempted suicide. Sometimes a person with gender dysphoria assumes an identity in the opposite sex. This may involve undergoing hormone and perhaps surgical treatment to change their sex physically, although medical treatment is not a prerequisite of transsexualism or of being recognised in the acquired gender.

## **Gender Recognition Certificate**

This certificate is issued by a Gender Recognition Panel. A holder of a full Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) is legally recognised in his or her acquired gender for all purposes. This means that the person in question now belongs to the opposite gender in both a legal and social context. The GRC will be issued to an applicant if he or she satisfies the panel that they fulfil all the criteria outlined in the Gender Recognition Act 2004. The Act requires that the applicant has or has had gender dysphoria, has lived in the acquired gender for two years prior to the application, and intends to live permanently in the acquired gender. A full GRC also gives the holder the means to obtain a new birth certificate.

## **Hermaphroditism or Intersexuality**

Hermaphroditism or Intersexuality occurs when the anatomical sex is ambiguous. It may or may not be accompanied by various degrees of gender dysphoria. The condition may arise due to certain congenital disorders or hormone imbalances in the foetus or placenta. Intersexuality means having some of the same physical characteristics of both sexes, but these are generally secondary characteristics. Intersexuality is rare: it means having both a penis and one or more ovaries.

**MtF**

Male to female transsexual. A person who is changing, or has changed, gender from male to female.

**Physical Sex**

Sex as determined by the match between body and sex organs, i.e. male, female or intersex. Sex refers to someone's physical or anatomical sex – in other words, which type of genitals they possess. Except in very rare cases of people who are intersexed, anatomical sex is well defined and easy to interpret.

**Sexual Orientation**

This can be an orientation towards persons of the same sex (lesbians and gay men) or an orientation towards a person of the opposite sex (heterosexual) or an orientation towards persons of the same sex and the opposite sex (bisexual). The concept of sexual orientation is frequently allied with transsexual issues (often abbreviated to LGBT). Transsexual people, however, can be heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**Trans**

A generic term generally used by those who identify themselves as transgender, transsexual or transvestite.

**Transgender**

An umbrella term used to include transgender people, transvestites, and those with gender dysphoria.

**Transgender person**

A person who feels a consistent and overwhelming desire to transition and fulfil their life as a member of the opposite sex. Someone in this position will have the medical condition gender dysphoria.

## **Transvestite**

This is the clinical name for a cross-dresser, a person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex. Generally, these persons do not wish to alter their body and do not necessarily experience gender dysphoria.

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