

IMPERIAL

Guidance for colleagues to support someone who is transitioning

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Definitions of key terms	1
3	Names and pronouns	2
4	Ways to support your colleagues	2
5	Frequently asked questions	3
6	External organisations / Resources	4

1 Introduction

We encourage colleagues reading this policy to first read the Trans Staff Policy and familiarise themselves with Imperial's commitment as this guidance is a supplementary document which should be used alongside the policy.

If you have a colleague who is transitioning, the most important thing is to be supportive and maintain confidentiality. Imperial fosters an inclusive environment for all staff and you are contributing to this by being a supportive colleague to ensure that they feel welcome and able to be themselves fully in the workplace.

2 Definitions of key terms

Trans

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as or does not sit comfortably with their sex.

Transitioning

The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify with. This may involve medical treatment for some people such as hormone therapy or surgery etc. but not all trans people will want or be able to have this.

Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and/or family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

Cis or cisgender

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

Deadnaming

Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.

Misgendering

Referring to a trans person using a pronoun or other forms of address that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

3 Names and pronouns

Try to use the correct name and pronoun to address your colleague if they make their preference clear.

Pronouns are the words we use to refer to a person when not using their name, e.g. “he”, “she”, “they”, “ze”. If you are not sure what pronouns to use to address an individual, simply ask. If you make a mistake, say sorry and try to use the right words from then on. You should also gently correct other members of staff or anyone else who uses the incorrect pronoun.

You might choose to foster a more inclusive culture where people of all gender identities feel comfortable sharing their pronouns by choosing to share your own, for example, “My name is X. My pronouns are she/her,” Imperial staff are free to share their pronouns with their colleagues if they feel comfortable doing so, but nobody should ever be forced to share their pronouns if they do not wish to.

Please refer to [Imperial's guidance on personal pronouns](#) for more information.

4 Ways to support your colleagues

- Be an Active Bystander by intervening and challenging any inappropriate behaviour you see directed towards trans and non-binary colleagues. Imperial provides [Active Bystander training](#).
- Do not ask intrusive questions. It is never appropriate to ask whether someone has had, will have or is considering any form of medical transition. Even if you know that someone is transitioning, it is inappropriate to ask personal questions about their transition. Always take their lead if talking to them regarding their transition. If you genuinely want to know more, do your own research.
- Remember that the process of transitioning will be different for each individual and consequently, their needs will differ too.
- If a trans individual needs support, be non-judgemental, listen and show openness and empathy towards them. Give information on where they might get help or further support at Imperial and outside (see Section 5 of the Trans Staff Policy).
- Read more suggestions on [how to be a trans ally](#).

5 Frequently asked questions

A colleague has told me they are thinking of transitioning, how can I support them?

Listen to them without judging or making assumptions about them. Guide them to sources of support within and outside the University.

I know that my colleague is trans and there are so many questions I want to ask them about the whole experience and process etc. Is it all right for me to ask questions and let other people know about my colleague being trans?

It is important to educate oneself using online resources. Imperial has developed resources for people who wish to learn more about [how to be a trans ally](#). The [Imperial 600](#) staff network may also be able to signpost individuals to other resources.

While one trans person may be open about their experiences and identity, it does not mean everyone is and it does not give you a right to ask obtrusive questions such as what their “real” or “birth” name is etc. You should take the lead of the individual and respect their privacy and boundaries.

It is the right of the individual to choose whether they wish to be open about their gender identity. Do not tell others about a person’s trans status. To ‘out’ someone, without their permission is a form of harassment and, possibly, a criminal offence.

How do I stop someone teasing or ignoring a trans individual?

Imperial is committed to investigating all allegations of transphobia. As well as deadnaming, misgendering, teasing or ignoring someone, there are [other behaviours that can be recognised as inappropriate and should be stopped](#).

Be an Active Bystander and intervene through one of [these four intervention strategies](#) (4 D’s).

If someone unintentionally uses the wrong or previous name, pronoun or other form of address, then you should help to gently correct them or remind them to use the correct name, pronoun or other form of address going forward.

All incidences, or continued incidences, of harassment/bullying towards the trans person needs to be reported. You may wish to discuss this with the trans individual to try and support them.

Once you have discussed with the individual, you may wish to report it to your manager, HR, your trade union, [Confidential Care](#) (CiC) (external), or using the [Report and Support](#) tool. [Harassment Support Contacts](#) can also help you explore your options.

6 External organisations / Resources

[Gires](#)

[The Gender Trust](#)

[Press for Change](#)

[a:gender](#)

[Gendered Intelligence](#)

University Management Board

May 2025