



Respect

Supporting trans students
at Leiden University



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**Universiteit
Leiden**

The Netherlands

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Rigid stereotypes of masculinity and femininity cloud the judgment of talent. The experiences of trans-people open our eyes to the extent to which gender is actually a highly complex and fluid phenomenon. Their insights help to make this university an open, stimulating community – not only for them, but for everybody!

*Dr. Isabel Hoving
Diversity Officer Leiden University*

This brochure offers information about trans students at Leiden University and was made after consultation with them.

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Introducing Respect

Respect is Leiden University's official guideline in supporting trans students. It advises you on how to respond to the needs and concerns of trans students with understanding and dignity. Inside you will find information that can help you understand what being a trans person means. You will also find practical advice on how to respond to the needs and concerns of trans students. Furthermore, this guideline provides references to resources to help you respond to the needs of trans students.

This guideline is not comprehensive, nor does it address the issues of all trans people. Keep in mind that each trans person, just like everyone, is different. Thus, this guideline should be taken as a minimum standard for respectful behaviour.

Who... is this guideline for?

Every instructor, staff member, administrator, or anyone who has direct contact with students at Leiden University is advised to read and implement this guideline. Students are also encouraged to abide by this guideline.

Why... do we need this guideline?

- To raise awareness of the diversity of gender experience
- To foster a learning environment where people can thrive as they are
- To ensure consistency of the treatment of trans students at Leiden University

Exploring gender

Key gender terms

Gender is a social classification system. As a legal classification system, in most countries, there are only two possible designations: male and female.

Our gender designation is declared by the doctor or whoever attended our birth. This declaration is based on the inspection of our external genitalia. The presence of a penis solicits a male gender assignment, while its absence solicits a female gender assignment. The gender declared by the doctor or midwife gets registered in our birth certificate, becomes our legal gender, and subsequently we are raised and socialized according to the norms culturally associated with that **gender assignment**.

As we continue to grow, our **gender identity** develops. Gender identity refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender. If gender assignment is what the doctor (or midwife) declared, then gender identity is what you realized your gender to be.

If gender identity is our internal experience of gender, then **gender expression** is our externalization of that experience. Gender expression is how we present our gender identity to ourselves and to the world. This presentation includes clothing, physical appearance, body decorations, body language, manner of speaking, tone of voice, etc. Gender expression is often referred to as **feminine**, **masculine**, or **androgynous** (both feminine and masculine).

Lastly, the gender of the people to whom we are mostly erotically/romantically attracted helps define our sexual orientation. **Sexual orientation** refers to our capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender. We are commonly referred to as **heterosexual** if we are erotically/romantically attracted to people whose gender is different from ours; **homosexual** if their gender is the same as ours; and **bisexual** if we are attracted to both genders. Some people describe themselves as **pansexual**, which means that they are gender-blind when it comes to their erotic/romantic attraction. Others are **asexual**, erotically/romantically attracted to no one.

Diversity of gender experience

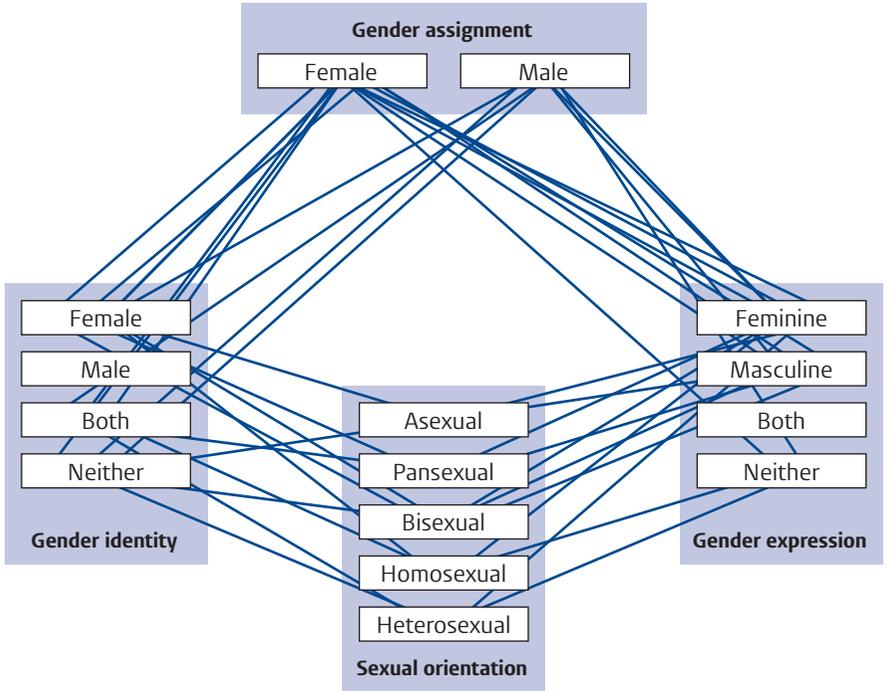
Every one of us has a gender assignment, a gender identity, a gender expression, and a sexual orientation. However, we are mostly familiar with these two patterns:

1. *Someone who was born with a penis will be assigned as male at birth, will grow up identifying as male (gender identity), will present himself as mostly masculine (gender expression), and will be heterosexual, i.e. erotically/romantically attracted to females/girls/women (sexual orientation).*
2. *Someone who was born with a vagina will be assigned as female at birth, will grow up identifying as female (gender identity), will present herself as mostly feminine (gender expression), and will be heterosexual, i.e. erotically/romantically attracted to males/boys/men (sexual orientation).*

This is the pattern considered as the legitimate gender experience, i.e. the valid, normal, moral, and in some countries, legal. This is the pattern promoted by the ‘**Cis-heteronormative Gender System**’.

‘Cis’ is a contraction of the term ‘cisgender’. A **cisgender person** refers to someone who has a gender identity and/or gender expression that matches the gender identity and/or gender expression traditionally associated with that person’s gender assignment at birth. Meanwhile, **heteronormativity** is the belief that heterosexuality (or being attracted to someone who has a gender opposite to your gender) is the only legitimate sexual orientation.

The pattern promoted by the cis-heteronormative gender system is just one of the myriad possibilities of experiencing gender. There are **many more** ways of experiencing gender. Moreover, the different aspects of gender don’t always stay the same throughout a person’s life. Try connecting the different gender variables in different ways and you’ll have a glimpse of the different possibilities. It may look like this...



Understanding the trans experience

Trans people's experience of gender

Trans is used to describe individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression do not conform to the gender identity and/or gender expression traditionally associated with their gender assignment.

Another definition that elegantly captures the trans experience is the one offered by Susan Stryker in her book **Transgender History**. She defines trans '*as the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting point*'.¹

The '*unchosen starting point*' is the gender assignment at birth. The conventional expectations associated with one's gender assignment are the 'socially imposed boundary'. And we see that the 'movements across these socially imposed boundaries' occur on the level of gender identity and/or gender expression.

Some trans people identify as **transsexual**. Transsexualism is the condition of having a gender identity that is 'opposite' to one's gender assignment at birth. The most common way of expressing this condition is '*being born in the wrong body*'.

Oftentimes, transsexual people take drastic steps to transform their bodies through hormone replacement therapy and surgeries, such as sex reassignment surgery. However, not all transsexual people experience their bodies as 'being wrong'. Not all transsexual people undergo hormone replacement therapy or surgeries. To these people, they are just people who have a female gender identity which just happened to have a body traditionally called male (**transsexual women/transgender women/trans women**) or people who have a male gender identity which just happened to have a body traditionally called female (**transsexual men/transgender men/trans men**).

¹ Stryker used this to define *transgender*, which is sometimes the long form of trans. In this guideline, trans is used in order to encompass different identities, expressions, and experiences that do not conform to being a cisgender person.

Being a transsexual person is just one of the ways of being trans. Another one is having a gender expression that is not traditionally associated with one's gender assignment at birth and/or with one's gender identity. For example, **crossdressers** wear clothes not traditionally associated with their gender assignment and gender identity.

There are also people who do not identify as either male or female, and their gender expression varies. Some of these individuals use **genderqueer** to refer to themselves.

These identities are not exhaustive of all the identities and experiences associated with being trans. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, there are many ways in which gender can be experienced. Fluidity and diversity characterize gender's reality; the sheer complexity of diverse experience cannot be captured by labels.

Dynamics of transprejudice

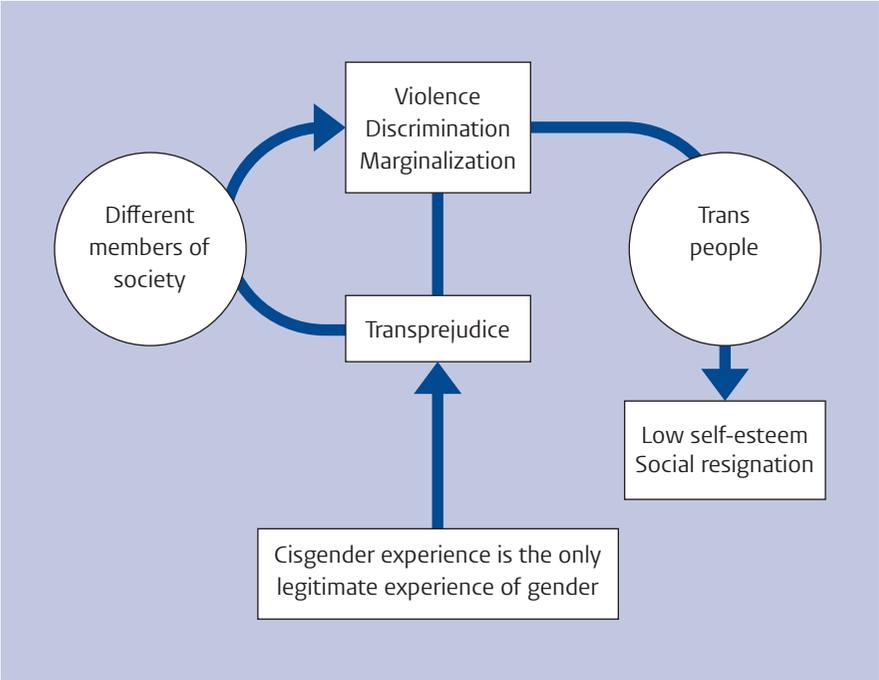
Trans lives challenge gender norms, which are based on the reality of cisgender people. Because cisgender norms are seen as the only legitimate gender experience, trans people often experience bigotry and prejudice.

On the next page is a diagram illustrating the dynamics of **transprejudice**.

The belief that the cisgender experience is the only legitimate experience of gender is the foundation of transprejudice (often referred to as transphobia). Strongly related to this is the belief that our genitalia are what truly determine our gender and that gender assignment at birth is our 'real gender'. Transprejudice is a feeling of disgust towards people whose gender identity and/or gender expression (or perceived gender identity and/or expression) do not match their gender assignment at birth.

Transprejudice is expressed by different members of society as violence, discrimination, and marginalization against trans people. In turn, these expressions of transprejudice are internalized by trans people, which then manifest themselves as feelings of low self-esteem and different forms of social resignation.

This vicious cycle repeats itself. To counteract it, it is imperative that transprejudice gets challenged in formative institutions such as universities.



Responding to the needs & concerns of trans students

When a student comes out as trans...

- Inform them that Leiden University supports trans people and makes sure that its trans students are treated with the same respect and understanding as other students.
- Politely ask what pronoun, name, and gender markers (e.g. Miss, Mr) they want to be referred to.
- Ask if they need help with informing other instructors about their gender identity. If so, ask how they want to proceed with it.
- Ask how you can support them and what sort of support they need.
- Some trans people might not be comfortable using the terms ‘born a boy/born a girl’. Ask how they want to refer to their past.
- Don’t ask trans people about their genitalia, the surgeries they have done or plan to undergo, or any other intimate questions regarding their bodies and sexuality. However, some trans people might feel the need to share these stories with you. When they do, tell them that what they share with you will be treated with the highest standard of sensitivity and confidentiality.

Guidance on specific concerns

1. Privacy & Confidentiality

- 1.1 All students must be protected from arbitrary or unwanted disclosure, or threat of disclosure of their information. Trans people should be treated with a high standard of privacy and confidentiality.
- 1.2 The free, prior, and informed consent of trans people must be sought before disclosing any information related to their body, assigned gender, gender identity and/or gender expression, or any aspect of their gender history. This includes issues of when, how, what, and to whom that information can be revealed.
- 1.3 Gossiping and rumour-spreading in the university about any aspect of someone’s gender history are inappropriate and may endanger the safety of that person.

2. Dress, Appearance & Gendered Facilities

- 2.1 Students should be allowed to dress according to what they feel is comfortable and appropriate to their gender identity.

- 2.2 If there are dress codes, trans students should be allowed to dress according to the dress code recommended for their gender identity and/or gender expression.
- 2.3 Students should be allowed to use the gendered facilities (e.g. toilets and shower rooms) that correspond to their gender identity. When concerns from other people arise regarding this issue, it is recommended that those concerns be addressed by educating them about gender diversity and the negative impact of transprejudice.

3. Names & Pronouns

- 3.1 Legal change of name and sex is allowed in the Netherlands. On December 17th 2013, the upper house of the Dutch parliament passed a new law to improve the accessibility of the procedure to amend the legal sex marker in an individual's birth certificate. This law came into effect on the 1st of July, 2014, and is valid for all Dutch citizens over the age of 16. The only necessary requirement to amend one's legal sex is a statement provided by a specialist (such as from the VU Medical Centre) that the individual's conviction to be a member of the opposite sex is of a permanent nature. This statement will allow civil servants to amend the individual's legal sex on their birth certificate.
- 3.2 The first name that will be used on blackboard can be changed to reflect the preferred name of a student. If a student wants to change his/her name you can inform him/her that these are the steps:
 - a. First, log on in studielink.nl. Go to 'My details', then click 'change personal details'. Then type the preferred name in the box 'First name (as you are called by family/friends)'. Click confirm.
 - b. Then, log on in uPrefs (link can be found at www.ulcn.nl). Click 'Preferences', and make sure 'Preferred Name' is selected. Save.
- 3.3 Official university documents, such as official transcripts and diploma, reflect the legal name and gender of the student. Name and gender can be changed upon presentation of a copy of the amended birth certificate showing the preferred name and preferred legal sex.

Resources for trans students

Support within Leiden University

- **Psychological Counsellors, SEA**
Open consultation hour: Monday-Friday 11.00-12.00 hrs
Plexus Student Centre
Kaiserstraat 25
2311 GN Leiden
Please check in at PITStop before 11.45 hrs.
<http://students.leiden.edu/your-study/guidance/>

Support group for trans people in Leiden

- **Werkgroep Trans*-initiatief COC Leiden**
Activities include Trans* Café every first Saturday of the month, and Gender Free Zone workshops
Langegracht 65
2312 NW Leiden
(071) 522 06 40
trans@cocleiden.nl
www.cocleiden.nl

Advocacy groups and psychosocial support groups

- **Patient Organisation Transvisie**
Rhijnspoorplein 26
1018 TX Amsterdam
(020) 205 09 14 (weekdays 13.00-17.00)
secretariaat@transvisie.nu
www.transvisie.nl

- **TransvisieZorg**
Rhijnspoorplein 26
1018 TX Amsterdam
(020) 205 09 13
info@transvisieZorg.nl
www.transvisieZorg.nl
- **The Netherlands Transgender Network (TNN)**
Rhijnspoorplein 26
1018 TX Amsterdam
(020) 205 09 15
info@transgendernetwerk.nl
www.transgendernetwerk.nl

Diagnosics and medical support

- **VUMC Centre of Expertise on Gender Dysphoria**
De Boelelaan 1117
1081 HV Amsterdam
To register with the VUMC Gender Centre for Adults: (020) 444 05 42
(weekdays 9.00-16.00)
genderteam-poli@vumc.nl
www.vumc.nl/afdelingen/zorgcentrum-voor-gender
- **Psycho InformaGroep**
(0182) 380 265 (weekdays 9.00-17.00)
info@psycho-informa-groep.nl
www.psycho-informa-groep.nl
- **Genderteam UMCG Groningen**
Hanzeplein 1
9713 GZ Groningen
(050) 361 88 80
genderteam@umcg.nl

