



Queen Mary
University of London

#PronounsMatter

What pronouns are, how to use them and why they matter

[hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/
protected-characteristics/trans](https://hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/protected-characteristics/trans)

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Examples of pronoun usage:

He went to the shops and bought **himself** a coffee.

They wrote and delivered the presentation **themselves**.

She organised the group meeting.

Ze wrote the assignment

At Queen Mary, we want to create an environment where everyone can be themselves and are treated with kindness, dignity and respect. Using people's correct pronouns is just one way you can help create a more inclusive culture.

What is gender identity?

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth.

Cisgender, often shortened to 'cis', describes people whose gender identity aligns with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth (i.e. people who are not trans). However, this is not the case for all people and therefore gender should not be assumed.

Transgender, or 'trans' is an umbrella term which describes people whose gender identity does not align with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth (for example a trans man could be someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies as a man). By definition, trans includes non-binary people (those whose gender identity

doesn't sit comfortably with the binary of 'man' or 'woman').

For more information on terminology see overleaf.

At Queen Mary we want to build an inclusive culture where people can openly use their correct pronouns and communicate these to staff and students.

What are pronouns and pronoun badges?

A pronoun is a word used to refer to a person in place of their name. The most common third-person identifying pronouns are she/her and he/him, but many people choose to use different **gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them, ze/hir/hirs and ze/zem/xys** or to be referred to by their first name instead of a pronoun.

Queen Mary is providing she/her, he/him, they/them badges and blank pronoun badges for staff and students to add their own pronouns. Pronoun badges are optional, however, wearing a pronoun badge may help others feel confident communicating their own pronouns.

Why does using the correct pronoun matter?

When someone is referred to with a pronoun (e.g. he/she/they) that does not align with their gender identity, it can make them feel unseen and unwelcome, and lead to feelings of distress and dysphoria. This is a form of **misgendering**, where someone makes the wrong assumption about your gender identity or refuses to acknowledge your gender identity.

Getting pronouns right is a basic way to respect a person's gender identity.

The practice of using pronoun badges normalises the idea that gender should not be assumed and demonstrates the University's commitment to recognising diverse identities and gender expressions.

What are some other ways I can show my support for gender diverse staff and students?

- **If you are ever unsure of a student's or staff's pronouns, ask.** If you make a genuine mistake and use the wrong pronoun, correct yourself, apologise briefly and move on.
- **Try to get in the habit of using 'they/them' until you know someone's pronouns.**
- **Put your pronouns in your email signature** (e.g. 'My pronouns are: they/them').
- When holding meetings, doing group work or making introductions in classes you can **normalise the practice of using pronouns**, for example: 'Hello, my name is Ashley, my pronouns are they/them'.
- **When creating forms or collecting personal information, include gender neutral options.** For example, including 'Mx' when asking for titles such as 'Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss'.

Resources

Queen Mary Resources

Trans Inclusion Policy Statement:

Queen Mary's approach and commitments to supporting trans staff and students.

<http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/protected-characteristics/trans/guidance/>

Trans Inclusion Definitions and Terminology:

<http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/protected-characteristics/trans/guidance/>

QM LGBTQ+ Staff Network:

<http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/protected-characteristics/sexualorientation/networks/qmout>

LGBT+ Society:

www.qmsu.org/groups/LGBT/

Report & Support: <https://reportandsupport.qmul.ac.uk>

Dignity at Work and Study Policy:

www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/procedures/policies/dignity

If you have any feedback or questions please contact:

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hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/protected-characteristics/trans

'Being a Trans Ally' leaflet:

<http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/protected-characteristics/trans/guidance/>

General Resources

East London Out Project (ELOP):

<http://elop.org>

Tower Hamlets LGBT Community Forum:

<https://thlgbtvoices.wordpress.com>

Galop: www.galop.org.uk

Switchboard, LGBT+ helpline:

<https://switchboard.lgbt>

Gendered Intelligence, specialising in young trans people under 21:

<http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>

Mermaids, supporting young gender variant people:

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk>

GIRES, for trans and gender non-conforming people of all ages:

www.gires.org.uk

TransUnite, a directory of trans support groups:

www.transunite.co.uk

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