

# GUIDE FOR TRANS, INTERSEX, NON-BINARY STUDENTS AND STAFF AT VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

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# Introduction

## Why is this guide important for staff, students, and VU Amsterdam?

Diversity is a spearhead of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, which strives for 'inclusive excellence' whereby students, teachers, lecturers, and employees within VU use mutual differences to stimulate more creativity and talent development.

The report 'Next Steps: What is the experience of LGBT+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender +] students in education?', published by UCAS in collaboration with Stonewall in the UK (Sept 2021), indicates:

- Students intend to be more open about their sexual orientation and gender identity in higher education, with overall levels of openness increasing from 64% at school to an expected 82% at university or college.
- Almost a third of LGBT+ students (31%), including over half of transgender students (55%), have already looked into what specific services are available to cater for their needs ahead of starting at university or college in the autumn.

To address these needs and objectives, it is vital to create a safe studying and working environment for all and to proactively share information. In addition to the Tips and tricks for an inclusive teaching environment, VU Pride recognises the need for a practical, hands-on guide for trans, non-binary and intersex students and staff, to provide helpful resources and concrete answers to frequently asked questions.

## How was the guide created?

This was a collaborative process involving stakeholders at all stages of the process:

- identifying the need for a guide for trans, non-binary, and intersex students and staff
- creating a survey and collecting data (see more details below)
- putting together content for the guide with students and staff from across the university.

## What next?

The guide will be reviewed at regular intervals in order to update the content where needed, based on changes in processes or information.

## How can you help?

Please share the guide with your networks.

We welcome feedback. Please email [pride@vu.nl](mailto:pride@vu.nl) with your input so we can keep improving the guide. Thank you!



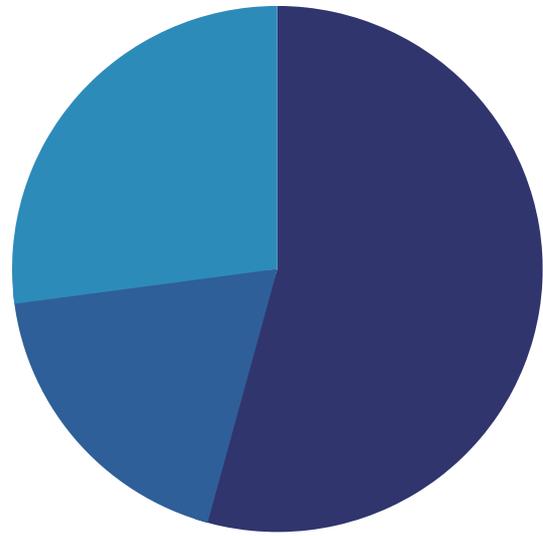
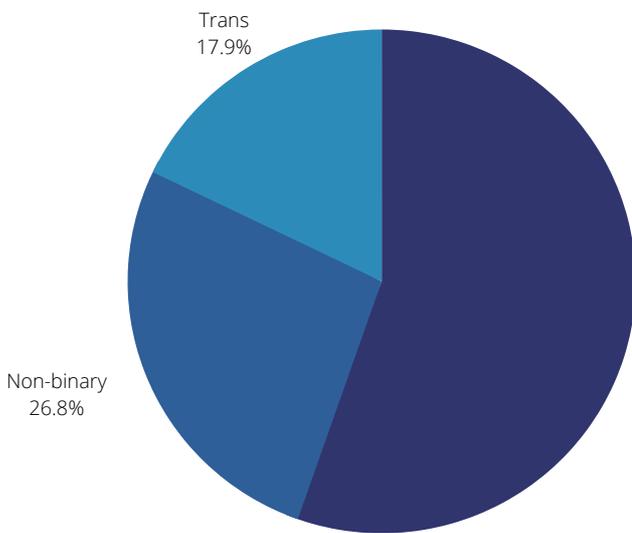
# Need for the Guide

VU Pride conducted a survey aiming to:

- validate the need for the guide
- gather more input on the topics and information that the guide should contain

The survey was sent to around 400 recipients from the VU Pride mailing list and was posted on the VU Pride Instagram account in December 2021.

The diversity of respondents is illustrated in the graphs



## Key findings

**69%**

**strongly or somewhat agree**

with the statement:

**I believe I would benefit from a guide with information for trans, non-binary, and intersex students and staff.**

**90%**

**strongly or somewhat agree**

with the statement:

**I believe others I know would benefit from a guide with information for trans, non-binary, and intersex students and staff.**

**75%**

**strongly or somewhat disagree**

with the statement:

**I currently know where to go if I have questions or issues related to being trans, non-binary, or intersex.**





# VU PRIDE



# VU Pride Guide for Trans, Non-binary and Intersex Students & Staff

Here you will find practical information aimed to be helpful to trans, non-binary, and/or intersex students and staff.

If you do not fall into these groups yourself, please consider reading the following sections:

1.3 Pronouns, as we encourage everyone to state their own pronouns if they feel comfortable doing so.

3.1 Educational Material, which aims to provide brief explanations on topics relevant to trans, non-binary and intersex people for those who may be new to such topics.



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# 1. How to inform VU Amsterdam of your...

## 1.1 Name

Official communication from VU Amsterdam uses [initials or chosen name (Dutch: 'roepnaam')] + surname (based on legal documents).

### 1.1.1. Legal Name Change

**Students:** Your legal name is taken from your ID/BRP (Basisregistratie Personen, i.e. the Dutch personal records database) by VU Amsterdam through Studielink. As such, it updates automatically, but the update can also be triggered by the student if they log in to or complete some action on Studielink. You can email student services (studentdesk@vu.nl) and request they trigger the update.

**Staff:** Send an email to the HRM Service Desk (servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl) with the request to change your name in the staff information systems. Attached to the email, please send a copy of your new ID card, preferably in PDF, JPEG or JPG-format, where the corners of the pages are visible. In the case of an identity card, send a copy of the front and back. In the case of a passport, the document must have a copy of the page(s) containing: photo, passport number, date of issue and expiration date (and for Dutch passports: BSN number). The HRM Service Desk will process the change in the system.

### 1.1.2 Chosen Name Change

**Students:** update your chosen name (roepnaam) on Studielink:

1. Log into [Studielink](https://studielink.nl)\* and go to "Details".
2. Change your "preferred first name" under Personal Details.
3. Save.

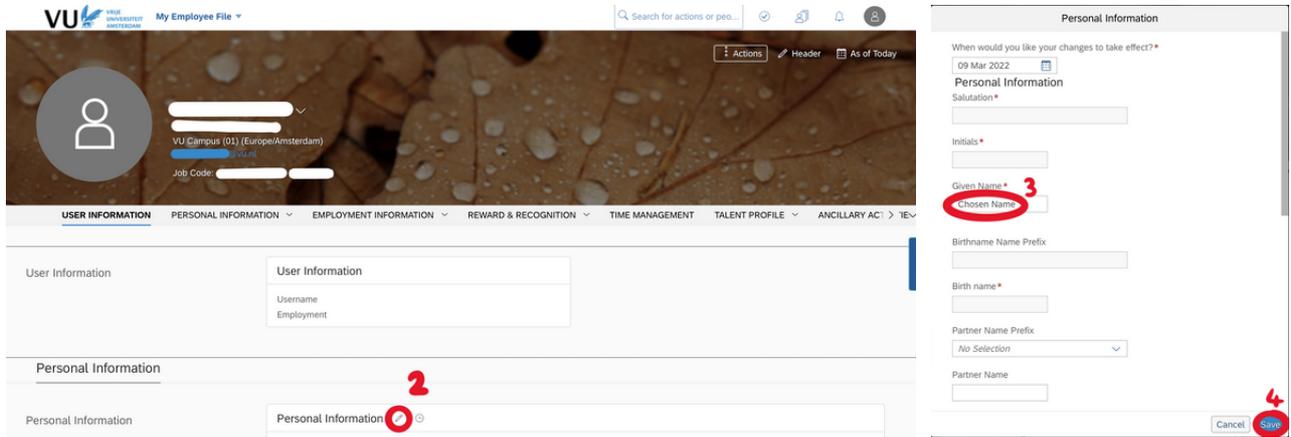
The screenshot shows the 'Personal details' form on the Studielink website. The form includes fields for 'First names', 'Initials', 'Preferred first name', 'Surname prefixes', 'Surname', 'Gender', 'Date of birth', 'Place of birth', 'Country of birth', and 'Nationality'. The 'Preferred first name' field is currently set to 'Chosen Name' and is highlighted with a red circle and a red number '2'. The 'SAVE' button at the bottom right is also highlighted with a red circle and a red number '3'. A red number '1' is visible in the top right corner of the page, near the 'Details' link in the navigation bar.

\*<https://studielink.nl>



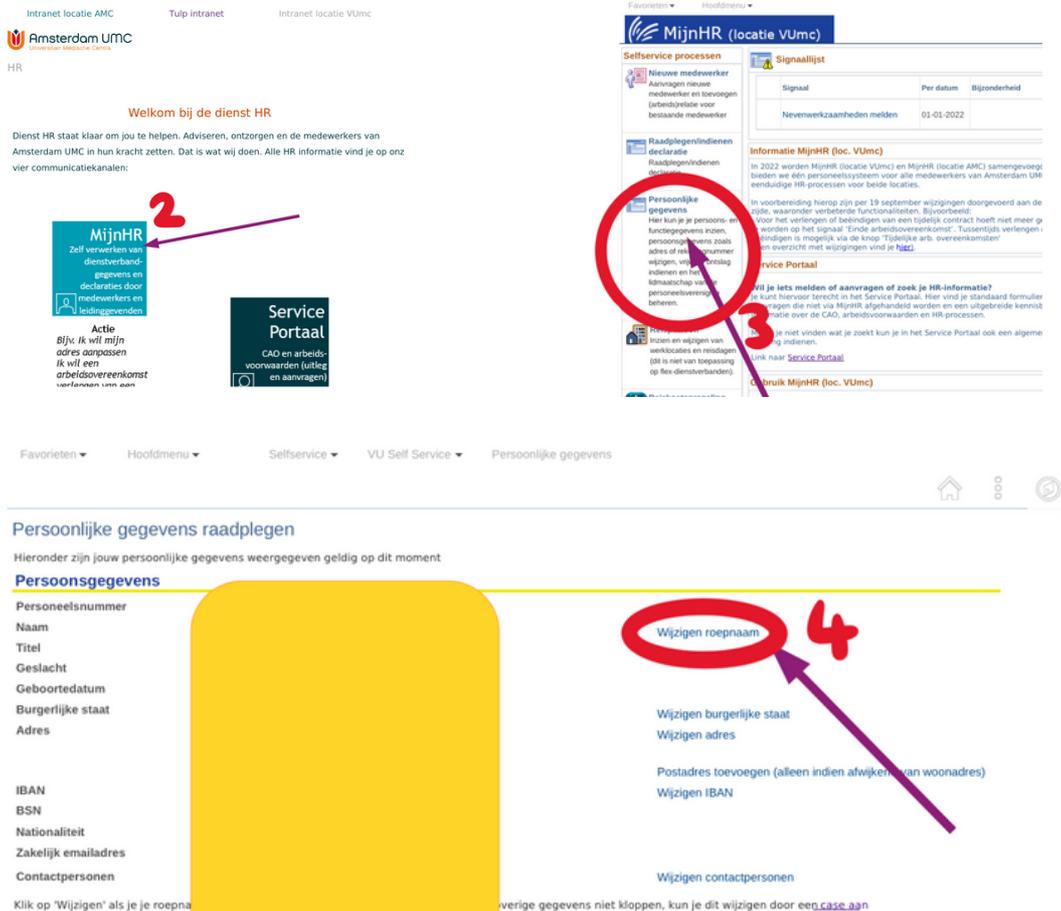
**Staff VU Amsterdam:** update your chosen name (roepnaam) with HRM.

1. Log in [here](#)\*, or on VUweb navigate to HRM / Personnel / My data. Here select "Personal Information" and then (on the right) click on the button "take action now".
2. Click on the pencil icon next to "personal information".
3. Edit your "given name".
4. Save.



**Staff Amsterdam UMC:** update your chosen name (roepnaam) with HRM.

1. Log in to HR Selfservice (in view)
2. Go to My HR
3. Click on Personal details
4. Here you can change your first name (roepnaam)



\*<https://performancemanager.successfactors.eu/sf/>



## 1.2 Gender

VU Amsterdam only keeps track of your legal gender i.e. the gender in your ID/BRP. This means that if your gender is not accurately reflected in your legal documents there is currently no official way to register this discrepancy. However, VU Amsterdam aims to remove gender markers when they are unnecessary. Thus, if you notice that your gender is included somewhere unnecessarily, please inform us of this by emailing [pride@vu.nl](mailto:pride@vu.nl).

### 1.2.1. Legal Gender Change

**Students:** Your gender is taken by VU Amsterdam through Studielink, from your ID/BRP. Thus, this should update automatically. This may take a while to travel through the system, so you can request it to be updated from the BRP to speed up the process.

**Staff:** Send an email to the HRM Service Desk ([servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl](mailto:servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl)) with the request to change your gender in the staff information systems. Attached to the email, please send a copy of your new ID card, preferably in PDF, JPEG or JPG-format, where the corners of the pages are visible. In the case of an identity card, send a copy of the front and back. In the case of a passport, the document must have a copy of the page(s) containing: photo, passport number, date of issue and expiration date (and for Dutch passports: BSN number). The HRM Service Desk will process the change in the system.

## 1.3 Pronouns

Currently, there is no official way to inform VU Amsterdam of your pronouns. However, many systems used by VU Amsterdam (including Canvas and Zoom) do allow you to include your pronouns. Employees can also add their pronouns to their email signature.

### 1.3.1 Canvas

1. Log in to [Canvas](https://canvas.vu.nl)\*
2. Click on "Account" in the menu bar.
3. Go to "Settings".
4. Click on "Edit settings".
5. Here you can select your pronouns to change them.

The screenshot shows the Canvas user interface. On the left, a blue navigation bar contains icons for Notifications, Profile, Files, Settings (circled in red with a '3'), ePortfolios, Shared Content, My Badges, QR for Mobile Login, and Global announcements. The main content area is titled 'Settings' and displays various user information fields: Full name, Display name, Sortable name, Pronouns (set to 'They/Them - Die/Diens/Zij (mv.)/Hun'), Language (System default (English (United Kingdom))), and Time Zone (Amsterdam). Below these fields, there are maintenance window notifications. On the right side, there is a 'Ways to contact' section with 'Email addresses' and 'Other contacts' lists. At the bottom right, there are buttons for 'Edit settings' (circled in red with a '4'), 'Download submissions', and 'Download Course Content'.

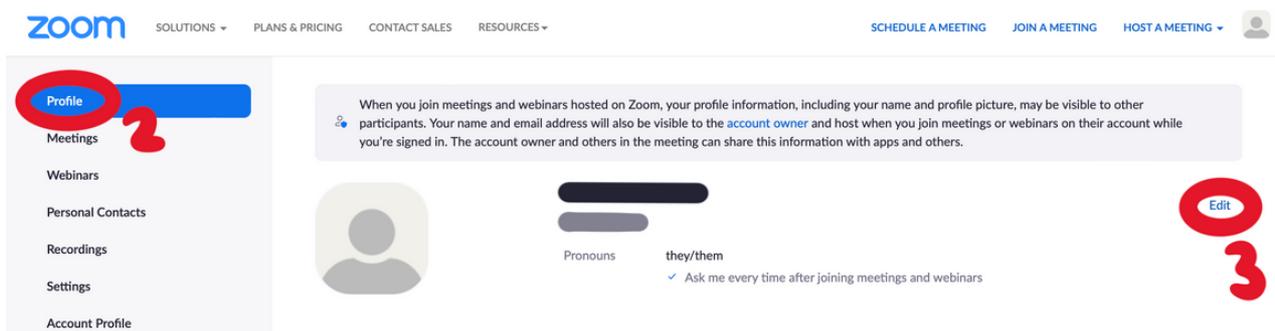
\*<https://canvas.vu.nl>



### 1.3.2 Zoom

In Zoom, there is the option to indicate if pronouns should be shown every time or if this should be asked before each meeting.

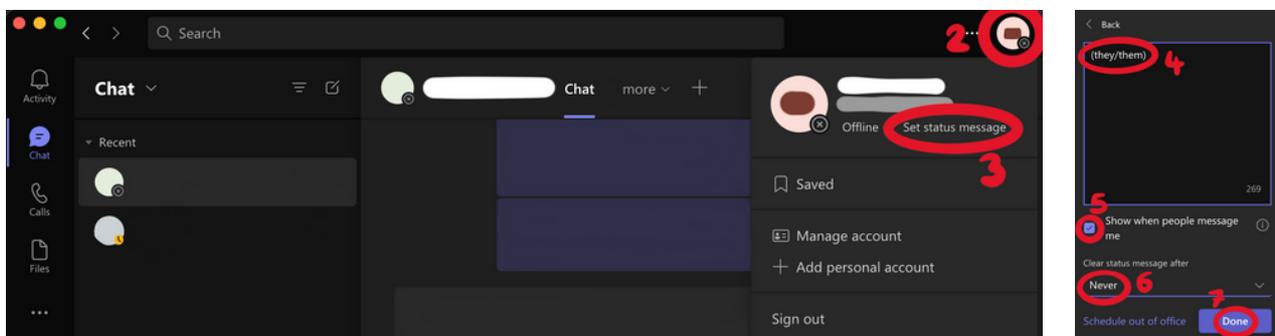
1. Go to the [Zoom page](https://vu-live.zoom.us/profile)\* of VU Amsterdam, click "Sign in" and log in with your VU details.
2. Left-click on "Profile".
3. Click on the upper section, and click "Edit" on the right-hand side of the page.
4. Adjust your pronouns in the section below your display name and choose when you want this to be visible. You can also adjust your name and display name here, but be aware that the zoom meeting host can change your display name.



### 1.3.3 Microsoft Teams

You can add your pronouns as a status and set your status to show every time someone messages you or @mentions you.

1. Log in to Microsoft Teams.
2. Click your 'photo' in the top right.
3. Click "Set status message".
4. Enter your pronouns.
5. If you want your pronouns to be visible when someone messages or @mentions you, select "Show when people message me".
6. Change "Clear status message after" to "Never" (or whenever you no longer want your pronouns to be visible).
7. Click "Done".



\*<https://vu-live.zoom.us/profile>



### 1.3.4 Slack

1. Log in to your Slack account.
2. In the top right corner, click on your 'photo'.
3. Click on "Profile".
4. Click on "Edit profile".
5. Edit your "Display name" in the profile and add your pronouns.
6. Click on "Save changes".

The screenshot shows the 'Edit your profile' dialog in Slack. It includes fields for 'Full name', 'Display name', 'What I do', 'Phone number', and 'Time zone'. The 'Display name' field contains 'Firstname Lastname (she/her)' and is circled in red with a red '5' next to it. The 'Save Changes' button at the bottom right is also circled in red with a red '6' next to it.

### 1.3.5 Miro

1. Log in to your Miro account.
2. In the top right corner, click on your 'photo'.
3. Click on "Settings".
4. Edit your name, adding your pronouns.
5. This name will now appear when you collaborate on the Miro board

The screenshot shows the 'Profile details' settings page in Miro. It has tabs for 'Profile details', 'Notifications', 'Integrations', and 'Your apps'. The 'First & Last Name' field contains 'Firstname Lastname (she/her)' and is circled in red with a red '4' next to it. To the right, there is a 'Your photo' section with a dark grey placeholder box.



## 1.3.6 Trello/Confluence/JIRA

### Profile and visibility

Manage your personal information, and control which information other people see and apps may access.

[Learn more about your profile and visibility or view our privacy policy.](#)

#### Profile photo and header image



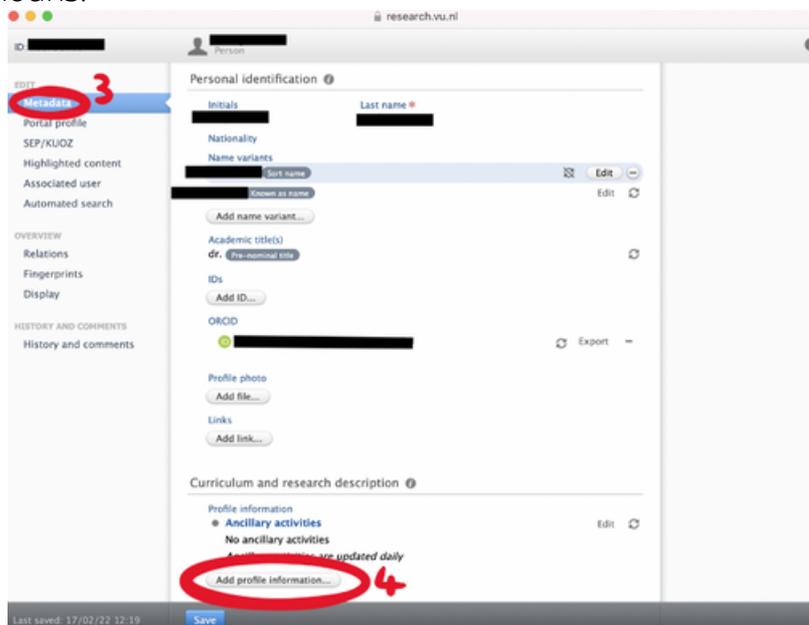
#### About you



1. Log in to your Atlassian account.
2. Navigate to the "Profile and visibility" page\*.
3. Add your pronouns under Full name and Public name.
4. Shortly afterwards this will appear in your Trello / Confluence / JIRA.

## 1.3.7 PURE

1. Log in to your VU PURE page.
2. Click "Edit profile".
3. In the pop-up window, in the Metadata tab, scroll down to the 'Curriculum and research description' section
4. Click "Add profile information...".
5. Here, you can add your pronouns.



\*<https://id.atlassian.com/manage-profile/profile-and-visibility>





## 3. Communication

This section includes communication about trans, intersex, and non-binary topics. First, in 3.1, we provide brief educational materials that can be used to introduce individuals to the topics of pronouns, gender, and sex. In 3.2 we provide examples of how to communicate with teachers about your name, pronouns, or issues regarding the curriculum. In 3.3 we discuss how to proceed when encountering problems relating to trans, intersex, and non-binary topics.

### 3.1. Educational material

For educational staff we highly recommend reading our [tips and tricks for inclusive teaching](#)<sup>\*</sup>. The main goal of this section is to provide succinct resources that trans, intersex, and/or non-binary people can share with others.

#### 3.1.1. Pronouns

A pronoun is a part of a sentence that is used to refer to a person or people, e.g. 'she', 'they', 'he', 'ze'. Websites like [this](#)<sup>\*\*</sup> can be used to show example sentences with common pronouns. Websites like [this](#)<sup>\*\*\*</sup> can be used to practice pronouns you may be unfamiliar with.

You can state your pronouns when introducing yourself ('I am Abdel, my pronouns are he/him'). When asking others to introduce themselves, you can invite them to also state their name and pronouns. However, it is important not to pressure anyone to share their pronouns. Some people may still be searching, may not yet be ready to share such personal information about themselves, or may not feel comfortable with any pronouns or reject the notion of a stable gender identity.

#### 3.1.2. Gender and Sex

In what follows we explain terms related to sex and gender in some further depth.

##### **Sex:**

Sex is commonly understood as a biological category: one's sex is defined by one's external genitalia (such as a penis or vagina), gonads (such as testes and ovaries), chromosomes (such as XY, XX, XXY), and hormones (such as testosterone and oestrogen). Most of us have learnt that sex is binary: based on their biological make up, a person is either 'male' or 'female'. However, the real story is not as clear-cut. There is much variation in people's biological constitution, which we can see, for instance, in intersex people, who have biological characteristics from more than one sex. Biologists such as Anne Fausto-Sterling even question whether such a thing as 'biological sex' truly exists. She argues that sex is inextricably linked to social and cultural constructs of gender, and for that reason refers to 'sex/gender' instead.

<sup>\*</sup>found on <https://vu.nl/en/about-vu/more-about/vu-pride>

<sup>\*\*</sup><https://en.pronouns.page/pronouns>

<sup>\*\*\*</sup><https://www.practicewithpronouns.com>



## Gender:

Even though many people feel as though their gender flows naturally from their sex, gender is not a biological given but a socio-cultural construct. It refers to masculinity and femininity, and everything in-between and beyond. Gender identity is how a person perceives themselves in relation to gender and is thus impacted by their society's framework of gender. Please note that the concept of gender is more complex than this guide is able to discuss, and that many individuals have different conceptions of and experiences with gender.

## The gender binary:

The gender binary is a western system of classification that views sex, gender, and sexuality as biologically linked and binary: it posits that to have male sex characteristics means that one is masculine and desires women, while to have female sex characteristics means that one is feminine and desires men. It is clear, however, that there is much greater variability in sex, gender, and sexuality than is captured by the gender binary. Indeed, the gender binary is not present in all cultures and has not always been there even in western societies. The reason, however, that such binary thinking is so pervasive is that many people are taught from the moment they are born to act in certain ways based on their sex characteristics, which makes it *feel* natural. Some have even argued that sex itself is gendered: without a socio-cultural concept of binary gender, sex would not exist and instead we would simply refer to a range of bodily variations.

Importantly, the gender binary is not a neutral system that simply describes human variation, but one that hierarchically organises people: women are inferior to men, and those who act outside of the expectations of their sex by enacting a different gender or sexuality are viewed as unnatural. It is what underpins much of the discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual +) people.

## Cisgender:

The term cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity aligns (within the gender binary) with the sex they were assigned at birth. It reflects the characteristics of the gender binary, in that a cisgender person's gender identity is what others expect them to identify as. For example: someone who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman. The term cisgender is an adjective, it should not be used as a noun, and is commonly used as an antonym of transgender.

## Transgender:

The term transgender, sometimes shortened to trans, refers to a person whose gender identity does not align (within the gender binary) with the sex they were assigned at birth. In other words, it does not align with the ideas of the gender binary about sex and gender. For example: someone who was assigned female at birth and does not identify as a woman. The term transgender is an adjective and should not be used as a noun. Transgender is, furthermore, an umbrella term that also includes (but is not limited to) non-binary, genderfluid, and genderqueer people. However, not all non-binary, genderfluid, and genderqueer people necessarily identify as trans; always be respectful about which labels people choose for themselves.



## Non-binary:

Non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied: they can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject binary identities altogether. Non-binary people can feel that their gender identity and gender experience involves being both a man and a woman, or that these are fluid, in-between, or completely outside of that binary.

## Genderfluid:

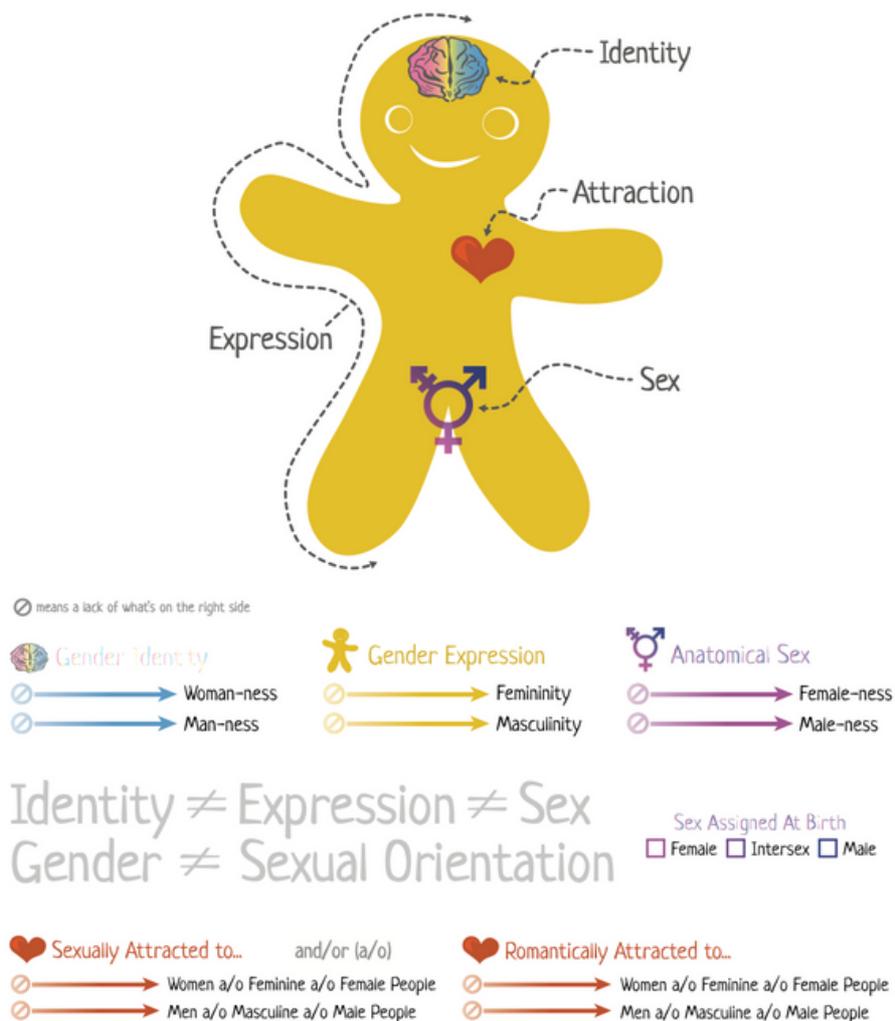
A person who is genderfluid is flexible with regard to the gender with which they identify, which means that their gender identity, gender expression, and/or experience of their gender changes over time.

## Genderqueer:

Genderqueer can refer to the feeling that one's gender is fluid, that one's gender exists outside the gender binary, or that gender is restrictive. Furthermore, genderqueer can also refer to anyone who 'queers' gender. To queer gender means to do things that are outside of the norm of one's actual or perceived gender identity.

## Helpful image\*:

### The Genderbread Person v4 by its pronounced METROsexual.com



Genderbread Person Version 4 created and uncopyrighted 2017 by Sam Killermann [For a bigger bite, read more at: www.genderbread.org](http://www.genderbread.org)

\*<https://www.genderbread.org>



## 3.2. Communication Examples

In this section we included templates to make it a little easier to inform staff of information related to your pronouns, name or information on inclusive teaching. These templates are suggestions, not official communication guidelines or requirements.

### 3.2.1. Pronouns

Dear <Title Name>,

I am <reason for interaction (e.g. starting as a ... student / taking your class ... / starting my position ...)> in <start date>, and I just wanted to let you know in advance that I use <insert your pronouns> pronouns. Below I have included some more information about pronoun usage in case you have any questions.

Thanks in advance,

<Name>

### 3.2.2. Name

Dear <Title Name>,

My name is <correct name> and I am <reason for interaction (e.g. starting as a ... student / taking your class ... / starting my position ...)> in <start date>. I just wanted to let you know in advance that my name is different <in / on> <system>, where my name is <wrong name> instead of <correct name>. I just wanted to point out the discrepancy to avoid any confusion.

Thanks in advance for your understanding,

<Name>

### 3.2.3 Curriculum

Dear <Title Name>,

I hope you are well.

I have been getting more active within VU Pride for the last year, and one of our ongoing projects is based on making the teaching environment at VU Amsterdam more inclusive. I'm not sure if you have seen this already, but we recently released a guide for academic staff about this.

I thought that you might be good person to send this to because <reason for sending this email>.

Best,

<Name>



### 3.3. What to do if there is a problem

If you experience someone at VU Amsterdam who is disrespectful of your identity, our first recommendation is always that you speak to them directly and address the issue. VU Pride aims to educate students and staff at VU Amsterdam on issues regarding sexuality, gender, and sex (for example with this guide, or with our [tips and tricks for inclusive education](#)). However, most individuals at VU Amsterdam are not experts on issues relating trans, intersex, and non-binary topics. Therefore, short, informative and respectful emails or conversations are often the simplest and most direct way to solve problems related to such topics. Above we have provided some brief educational material and template emails that can be sent to others when addressing these problems.

You can also make an appointment with the student psychologists (see below). They can perhaps help you or refer you to other psychologists or social workers with more experience on gender topics.

We understand that addressing and educating others about issues regarding identity can be difficult, scary and/or exhausting. If you need support, feel unable to address the problem directly yourself, or feel that someone is not responsive to your feedback, please get in touch with us by emailing [pride@vu.nl](mailto:pride@vu.nl). VU Pride can then provide support and connect you with students, study associations or other individuals who may be able to help you further. Additionally, your email helps VU Pride to get an overview of common problems, which allows us to implement more generalised, university-wide solutions. Lastly, you can also reach out to the Diversity Office of VU Amsterdam if you feel you are being discriminated. There is a wide range of expertise on discrimination within the diversity office ([divers@vu.nl](mailto:divers@vu.nl)).

## 4. Support and External Resources

### 4.1. Peer Support at VU Amsterdam

VU Pride TalkS! hosts monthly peer group meetings where we discuss different topics and issues we face within the LGBTQIA+-community in a safe, inclusive, and diverse environment. These events start with a speaker who briefly talks about their own experience with a particular topic to provide a starting point for the discussion. These meetings usually have a broad focus, but also aim to be a space to discuss any issues you may be facing, including issues related to being



trans, non-binary, and/or intersex. Additionally, some of these meetings will be focused specifically on trans, non-binary, and/or intersex experiences. You can find upcoming VU Pride TalkS topics on the VU Pride [website](#)\*. If you would like a VU Pride TalkS meeting to have a specific focus, you can suggest a topic and/or to be a speaker by contacting us via email at [pride@vu.nl](mailto:pride@vu.nl).

Apart from specific peer support events, VU Pride hosts a wide range of both fun (e.g. game nights and movie nights) and educational activities (e.g. panels and debates) where you can meet other VU Pride Supporters. Upcoming events can be found on [instagram](#)\*\* or on the VU Pride [website](#)\*.

## 4.2. Psychological support at VU Amsterdam

VU Amsterdam offers psychological support for students, see [here](#) for more information. This starts with an intake conversation, where the student psychologist discusses with the student what is going on, how long this has been going on for, and what the student wants. After this, the student psychologist gives suggestions, based on the situation of the student. Depending on the needs of the students and depending on the situation the student psychologist can offer up to five consultations after this. If there is a need for support for a longer period of time, the student psychologist can refer you to a suitable person or organisation. The intake is a possibility for the psychologist and student to get to know one another. During this intake you can see if the support is suitable for you. Also, you can share your needs during this intake.

Student psychologists are familiar with LGBTQIA+ experiences. However, they do not always have the specific expertise that a psychologist who is specialised in LGBTQIA+ topics has. The student psychologists speak to students of the LGBTQIA+ community and LGBTQIA+ students are always welcome. We understand that it can be scary to ask for psychological support as an LGBTQIA+ person and we understand you might be worried about the sensitivity towards LGBTQIA+ issues. VU Pride is in touch with the student psychologists of VU Amsterdam. If you are receiving psychological support and you would like to share your experiences, please send us an email: [pride@vu.nl](mailto:pride@vu.nl). Feedback helps to improve the help and support to students.

## 4.3. External Resources

### 4.3.1. Trans Resources

- [TNN](#) is a Dutch Transgender organisation focused on advocacy.
- [Transvisie](#) is a Dutch organisation focused on healthcare.
- [Trans mutual aid resources](#) are collected by the trans healthcare network.

\*<https://vu.nl/pride>

\*\*<https://www.instagram.com/vuprideamsterdam>



### 4.3.2. Therapy / Counselling

- For external therapy, individuals commonly need a referral from their GP / other medical specialist to ensure that their healthcare costs (above the co-payment) are covered by their health insurance company.
  - The [pink social map](#) has a list of LGBTQIA+ specific therapists and resources.
  - [Roze hulp](#) (website for LGBTQIA+ friendly professionals) allows you to search for LGBTQIA+ specific therapists.
- [Praten Online](#) is a new initiative, supported by the University of Groningen, which offers 8 online sessions with a therapist and homework for LGBTQIA+ people with suicidal thoughts.

### 4.3.3. Peer support

- [ASVGay](#) is an LGBTQIA+ student association, where you can expand your network and meet other LGBTQIA+ people.
- [COC's switchboard](#) is a free phone and chat service that provides a listening ear to LGBTQIA+ people.

