



## Center for Women's and Gender Studies UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

### **Guidelines on Affirming Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) Students' Names, Pronouns, and Titles**

The term “transgender and gender non-conforming” (TGNC) refers to people whose *gender identity* does not match their *sex assigned at birth* (e.g., men who were assigned female at birth) and those whose *gender expression* does not match their gender identity (e.g., masculine women), respectively (see these infographics ([1](#), [2](#)) by the Commission on Human Rights).

Transgender and gender non-conforming people often live by a name (or “lived name”) that affirms their gender identity and/or expression (GIE), and this is usually different from their legal name (or “dead name”). They may also use pronouns and titles that reflect their GIE. However, these aren't limited to feminine (e.g., [she/her](#), Miss, Ms., Mrs.) and masculine (e.g., [he/him](#), Mr.) pronouns and titles, because many TGNC people use [singular they/them pronouns](#) (an English counterpart to the Filipino gender-neutral *siya*), [neo-pronouns](#), and [gender-neutral titles](#).

It is not unusual, however, for TGNC people to experience *deadnaming* (i.e., being called by their legal name) and *misgendering* (i.e., being called by pronouns or titles that do not affirm their gender). Both deadnaming and misgendering are acts of discrimination and violence against TGNC people, specifically, and LGBTQI people, more generally. Such acts, when committed in an educational setting, have long-term and detrimental effects on the mental health and academic performance of TGNC students (Oswald & Wyatt, 2011, as cited in Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2017).

Transgender and gender non-confirming students of the University of the Philippines Diliman have the right to express their gender identity and/or expression, without fear of discrimination. Below are three basic guidelines to help you create a classroom environment that includes and affirms TGNC students.

***Ask for your students' lived name, pronouns, and titles, regardless of their transgender status.*** Currently, the University's information system does not allow for TGNC students to include their lived name, pronouns, and titles. Some students let their professors know ahead of time that they are transgender or gender non-conforming and of their lived names, pronouns, and titles, so that their professors do not deadname or misgender them in front of their classmates (during roll calls, for example; Pryor, 2015, as cited in Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2017). Others feel anxious or weighed down by having to do so; therefore, they take the risk of being deadnamed or misgendered throughout the



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semester, or at least until they decide to inform their professor of their lived names, pronouns, and titles. You may use this sample prompt from one of our faculty members:

*"What is your lived or chosen name, or your nickname? What are your pronouns? What title/s do you use? Note: If you are transgender, I understand that answering these questions truthfully may not be easy. Coming out should ideally be done at your own pace, in your own time, so please only indicate the pronouns and titles that you would like me to use to refer to you. For the record, I use he/they pronouns and the title Mx."* (Montilla Doble, L. J., personal communication, March 8, 2021)

**Use a TGNC student's lived name, pronouns, and titles--and encourage your non-TGNC students to do the same.** When a TGNC student lets you and their classmates know of their lived name, pronouns, and titles, it is a moment of vulnerability and trust. Recognize this, and show your commitment to upholding inclusivity and gender equality in the classroom (<https://mypronouns.org>). Pro-tip: Think of lived names as similar to nicknames, in that, for some cisgender (i.e., non-transgender) people, their nicknames are not at all based on or related to their legal names!

**Model other best practices for affirming TGNC students.** Some faculty members include their pronouns alongside their names in their e-mail signatures. Others even have a lived name and pronoun clause in their syllabi. Here's an example based on the University of Southern Indiana College of Liberal Arts Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion syllabus statement:

*"Please let me know of your lived name (especially if it's different from your legal name or your name on CRS) and your pronouns (e.g., he, she, they, ze) so I can create a learning environment in which you are safe and respected."* (C. Steltenpohl, personal communication, March 5, 2021)

Other best practices include using [gender-sensitive and/or gender-neutral language](#) whenever applicable (e.g., using "everyone" or "folks" instead of "guys" or "ladies and gentlemen", using the [singular "they"](#) instead of "he/she").

### Resources

American Civil Liberties Union, Gender Spectrum, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, National Center for Lesbian Rights, & National Education Association. (n.d.). *Schools in transition: A guide*



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for supporting transgender students in K-12 schools. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/schools-in-transition-a-guide-for-supporting-transgender-students-in-k-12-s>

Beemyn, G. (2012, June 3). *Check the box: Trans checklist for colleges & universities*. Campus Pride. <https://www.campuspride.org/resources/transgender-checklist-for-colleges-universities/>

Commission on Human Rights. (2016). *CHR Gender Ombud guidelines: Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment under the MCW (RA 9710) and related laws*.

<https://chr.gov.ph/publication/>

Campus Pride. (n.d.). *Campus Pride trans policy clearinghouse*.

<https://www.campuspride.org/tpc/>

Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals Trans\* Policy Working Group. (2014, June 10). *Suggested best practices for supporting trans\* students*.

[https://www.lgbtcampus.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=81:suggested-best-practices-for-supporting-trans--students&catid=21:press-releases&Itemid=124](https://www.lgbtcampus.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81:suggested-best-practices-for-supporting-trans--students&catid=21:press-releases&Itemid=124)

Goldberg, A. E. (2018, August). *Transgender students in higher education*. The Williams Institute UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-students-higher-education/>

GLSEN & National Center for Transgender Equality. (2020, October). *Model local education agency policy on transgender and nonbinary students*. <https://www.glsen.org/activity/model-local-education-agency-policy-on-transgender-nonbinary-students>

Hafford-Letchfield, T., Pezzella, A., Cole, L., & Manning, R. (2017). Transgender students in post-compulsory education: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.08.004>