



# Gender Recognition in Our Learning Community

## Key Terms to Understand

**Gender:** The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's assigned sex at birth.. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as outside of these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

**Gender Identity:** This term refers to our internal sense of self and how we operate in the world. It may or may not align with the sex/gender we were assigned at birth.

**Gender-Expression:** The conscious and unconscious choices we makes daily to outwardly express our gender identity. It may or may not align with the sex/gender we were assigned at birth.

**Cisgender:** This term refers to people whose gender identity or gender expression matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Nonbinary:** This term refers to people whose gender identity and expression do not conform to the binary terms of male and female.

**Intersex:** This term refers to people who are born with chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones and/or genitalia which do not meet the medical definitions of male or female.

**Transgender or Trans:** Used most often as an umbrella term; some commonly held definitions: 1) someone whose gender identity or expression does not fit within dominant group social constructs of assigned sex and gender; 2) a gender outside of the man/woman binary; 3) having no gender or multiple genders.

**Sexual Orientation:** The direction of one's sexual (erotic) and/or romantic attraction towards the same gender, opposite gender, or multiple genders. (Some sexual orientation terms are gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, etc.). It is separate from gender identity and thus transgender persons also have a sexual orientation. Like gender, sexuality is on a spectrum, meaning some people may experience fluidity in their sexuality, and that some people may not experience sexual attraction at all, or low desire for sexual activity (known as asexuality as a sexual orientation and agender as a gender identity).

**Outing/Outed:** The act or practice of revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person without their permission. This can be very harmful, and revelations like this should not be made without the explicit, express permission of the other person.

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## A Deeper Exploration of Binary & Nonbinary

Transgender people are not monolithic and experience gender in many diverse ways. As such, some transgender people locate themselves within a gender binary--male/female, masculine/feminine. Trans women are women, trans men are men. Some transgender people do not fall on this binary. They may identify as nonbinary, agender, genderqueer, gender fluid, Two Spirit, bigender, pangender, gender nonconforming, gender variant, etc.

Nonbinary people's gender identity and expression may not conform to societal norms of masculinity or femininity. Also, a nonbinary person's gender identity and expression (like everyone's) can change over time.

Because we are commonly socialized to have specific expectations about gender, and gender expression, our language, many of our cultural traditions or practices, things we buy and use, and even our physical spaces (like locker rooms and bathrooms) assume that a person identifies along a gender binary, which can create uncomfortable or unsafe situations for nonbinary persons.

We can support the safety and respect for all persons by not assuming a person's gender identity. We can also use language and support policies and practices that affirm all persons' ability to live, work, and socialize as their whole selves.

We should strive to create environments and experiences that encourage everyone to express their gender fully. This could mean choosing to use gender inclusive language in classrooms and work areas, avoiding gendered directions that are not germane, avoiding depicting some professional attire or uniforms as appropriate for either men or women, simply sharing guidelines or examples for a range of genders and allowing individuals to choose what is best for themselves.