



## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

<b>SOP CODE</b>	<b>SOP TITLE</b>
<b>ZEQ-002-01</b>	<b>SUPPORT TO GENDER VARIANT STUDENTS</b>

**PART 1**

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**PART 2**

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**PART 3**

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University Secretary	<b>Filled in by Administrator: AC</b>

**PART 4 (To be filled in by OOTS, QSU or RSSD)**

<input type="checkbox"/> This procedure has been revised and is no longer valid as from:	<input type="checkbox"/> Date of NEXT REVISION is extended until:	<input type="checkbox"/> SOP rendered obsolete on:
(Write date)	(Max. 4 years)	(Write date)

## 1. Reason for revision

1.1. New SOP

## 2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1. This procedure outlines the different UM support services available for gender-variant individuals during the transitioning process. This procedure also offers guidance for student members providing support to gender variant persons.
- 2.2. As a matter of principle, the certification issued by the University of Malta will reflect the documentation issued by the state institutions.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1. FICS: Faculties/Institutes/ Centres and Schools
- 3.2. GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation
- 3.3. Gender Variant Person: An individual whose gender identity or gender expression is not the same as the sex assigned at birth. This includes persons who do not identify with the traditional male or female gender binary.
- 3.4. JC: Junior College
- 3.5. SOP: Standard Operating Procedure
- 3.6. Transitioning Individuals: Persons who are currently undertaking, intend to undertake, or have completed steps—including medical, physiological, or social changes—to align their physical appearance with their gender identity.
- 3.7. UM: University of Malta

## 4. Responsibilities

### 4.1. Roles and Responsibilities of Gender Variant Person

- Gender Variant individuals have the right to express their identity, be treated with dignity, decide on disclosure, be addressed by preferred names/pronouns, access necessary support services, and request updates to their records.
- Gender Variant individuals are responsible for notifying UM of their support needs and providing UM with updated legal identification documents for record changes when legally required.

### 4.2. Roles and Responsibilities of Equity Office

- The Equity Office offers support to the UM community ensuring that all students enjoy the opportunity to participate in any activity or initiative at UM.

### 4.3. Roles and Responsibilities of Health and Wellness Centre

- Professional support and advice are readily available at the Centre offering different services aimed at enhancing the wellness of UM students.

### 4.4 Roles and Responsibilities of the Office of the Academic Registrar

- Discuss with the gender variant individual the transition process and assist in the transition support plan.
- Update databases with preferred names and titles.

#### 4.5 Roles and Responsibilities of JC Inclusion-Equity Office

- Discuss with the gender variant individual the transition process and assist in the transition support plan.
- Update databases with preferred names and titles.

## 5. Health and Safety requirements

5.1. N/A

## 6. Procedure

### 6.1 The Transitioning Process

6.1.1 Transitioning is a unique process of steps that a person takes to live in the gender they identify with rather than the one assigned at birth. In terms of the provisions of the [Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act Cap. 540](#), it is not necessary for individuals to undergo medical intervention to legally **change** their gender identity.

6.1.2 Transitioning can involve a variety of aspects:

- Medical Transition – some people decide to undergo medical treatments, hormone therapy or even gender affirming-surgery.
- Social Transition – Adopting a new name and/or gender in official records, using different pronouns, and changing outward appearance through clothing, hairstyles, or mannerisms to reflect one's gender identity. Communicating to other people about one's gender identity.
- Legal Transition – formally updating identification documents.

### 6.2 Medical Transition

6.2.1 It is ideal that transitioning UM students approach the Academic Registrar/ JC Inclusion-Equity Office so that they are appropriately directed and assisted.

- (a) The UM acknowledges that students undergoing medical transition may require time off for treatment and recovery, as well as academic adjustments to their programme of studies.
- (b) Support is extended equally to non-binary students and male/female trans students, regardless of whether they are undergoing surgery or other medical treatment.

- (c) If a student is experiencing fatigue or needs recovery time during any hormone treatment, temporary adjustments can be discussed with the Office of the Academic Registrar, Students FICS or JC as applicable.
- (d) UM will also consider adjustments to the student's study programmes and practical learning arrangements to minimise the impact of transitioning. If time off for reasons linked to transitioning are necessary, these issues should be discussed as part of the Transition Support Plan (6.5).

### 6.3 Social Transition

- 6.3.1 Gender variant individuals may be unwilling to undergo medical transitions. Notwithstanding this they may still wish to modify their external appearance through clothing, hairstyles, jewellery or even makeup. UM is committed to support gender-variant individuals as they begin to publicly present in their affirmed gender. Any necessary communication to the UM community will be handled with care and discretion. This process will be collaborative: the individual will be involved at every stage, and no management or communication plan will be implemented without their explicit consent (Refer to Transition Support Plan 6.5).
- 6.3.2 Gender-variant students may be reluctant or unable to change their legal name, but they may still request that they are addressed by their preferred name, title and pronoun. To effect such a request the students can send an email to [academicregistrar@um.edu.mt](mailto:academicregistrar@um.edu.mt) or [inclusion.jc@um.edu.mt](mailto:inclusion.jc@um.edu.mt) (JC Students) to agree on appropriate steps to update their personal records on UM databases. The student making the request will be assigned a UM official who will support the student to liaise with specific offices to ensure that the student's gender is identified correctly in different databases and record-keeping whenever possible. In such cases the UM officials will honour these preferences even if they may not correspond to that on their identity documents.

### 6.4 Legal Transition

- 6.4.1 Gender-variant persons have the right to legally establish their gender identity by making a declaratory public deed through a notary as provided in Cap. 540. They may express the intention to update their name, gender or use of preferred pronouns (or all of these) on UM records. Changes in the records will reflect legal updates as determined by the relevant state institutions.
- 6.4.2 UM officials are to address individuals by their preferred name, which may not correspond to that on their identity documents. UM / JC students should be given the opportunity to ask members of their respective FICS / JC, to use their preferred name, title, pronoun or name informally on a day-to-day basis, irrespective of any request to the national authorities to update their Official Identity Document.

- 6.4.3 When a student wishes to use their preferred name and/or title without being supported by legal documentation, the said student is advised to make a request with the Office of the Academic Registrar or the JC Inclusion-Equity Office, who shall assess the request and make the necessary adjustments when applicable, so that their preferred name is used where possible.
- 6.4.4 UM will strive to address such requests with sensitivity and in a timely manner.
- 6.4.5 Any requests for a change in name or gender are to be made in writing to the Office of the Academic Registrar, accompanied by the original or a certified true copy of one's updated identification document.

### 6.5 Transitioning Support Plan

- 6.5.1 Gender-variant people, starting to publicly present in their affirmed gender represents a significant milestone that requires support and cooperation from UM. Students are encouraged to approach the Equity Office or the Inclusion-Equity Office at JC for guidance and support. Additionally, those that intend to transition/ who are currently transitioning may consult mental health professionals available at the UM Health & Wellness Centre, to develop a support plan. Any necessary communication with staff members/students will be managed with sensitivity ensuring that the individual is always involved and agrees with the way UM manages this process.
- 6.5.2 Transitioning UM students should approach the Office of the Academic Registrar so that they are appropriately directed and assisted. Transitioning JC students may approach the Inclusion-Equity Office instead. Following are recommendations on how to handle a request for support from transitioning students:
- In an initial meeting with gender-variant student identify key contacts and elements for a Transition Support Plan;
  - Discuss and draw up a timeline for transitioning, with the understanding that timescales may change as necessary;
  - Consider timing issues with respect to the requirement to legally change one's name and update UM records;
  - Examine requests for a change of records to the qualification bodies concerned with respect to qualifications already awarded;
  - When briefing colleagues who are to provide support to the transitioning student, ensure that they are adequately briefed and trained to handle the matter; and
  - When the transitioning student agrees with the support plan, action points need to be communicated to staff for purposes of fulfilment of their duties at UM.

The UM shall:

- Ensure that all records of the gender-variant individual are updated with the

affirmed gender, new names/s and title upon presentation of official documentation from the relevant authorities.

- Store any documents with previous name/s and titles in compliance with its legal obligations and will ensure that they are kept confidential; and
- Provide involved staff with training as required for working closely with a student who is transitioning.

#### 6.5.3 Financial Hardship for Transitioning Students

- UM recognises that the transition process, including medical procedures or aligning one's appearance with their gender identity, may entail financial hardship. This may be particularly challenging for international students who might face family hostility and withdrawal of financial support during this time.
- Although there are no specific funding opportunities to cover specialist medical expenses related to transitioning, the UM's Student Solidarity Fund aims at assisting students in financial hardship. Students are encouraged to contact the [Student Solidarity Fund](#) for advice and support.

### 6.6 Student Admission

6.6.1 Gender variant individuals are not required to disclose their gender status when applying for a programme of study. Applicants who prefer not to disclose their sex or gender may select the 'other' category provided on the application form.

6.6.2 When a person applies for a new course, such as progressing from an undergraduate to a postgraduate programme or moving from JC to UM, the UM treats these as a new application. Every effort is made to ensure that a student's previous name or gender is not disclosed during this transition. Candidates are encouraged to initiate legal changes to name and gender as early as possible since these involve a lengthy procedure.

6.6.3 UM is required to conduct standard identity checks during the registration process. To support our gender variant students, these checks are performed with the strictest confidentiality and sensitivity.

### 6.7 Change in Issued University Official Documents and Alumni Records

6.7.1 Alumni wanting to have their name or gender changed on the Alumni database after completing JC, graduating from UM or participating in any JC / UM course can contact the Alumni office via email to [alumni@um.edu.mt](mailto:alumni@um.edu.mt), providing details of their current and former name and/or gender, title, date of birth, programme and year of graduation/last year of studies.

- 6.7.2 Alumni wishing to change their name on Official UM Documents previously issued can contact the Office of the Academic Registrar via email to [academicregistrar@um.edu.mt](mailto:academicregistrar@um.edu.mt). Official UM documents are issued by UM as a public awarding body. To such an end, the following applies.
- 6.7.3 Any changes in name, title or gender as indicated on an official UM document necessarily requires proof of a change in the respective name, title or gender on the Alumni's official identification documentation.
- 6.7.4 Request for such a change will only be acceded to after the person requesting the change delivers to the Academic Registrar, the original Official UM Document issued, and which the individual is requesting to change.
- 6.7.5 The UM reserves the right to annotate the re-issued Official UM Document with a small note thereon indicating that the said Document has been re-issued, and the date of the re-issue, however not quoting the reason for the said re-issuance.

## **6.8 References**

- 6.8.1 Requests for references by current or former students at any stage of their transition are to be made directly to the staff member from whom the letter or reference is being requested. The UM official drawing up the reference letter is to provide no indication of any previous name or gender identity of the requesting person and shall refer to such person with their preferred pronoun at the time of the request being made.

## **6.9 Confidentiality**

- 6.9.1 Gender identity data is protected under GDPR and requires explicit consent for processing.
- 6.9.2 The UM maintains confidentiality unless legally required to disclose information. Disclosure for specific purposes requires the person's consent. Releasing information without consent is a breach of law.
- 6.9.3 Requests for the removal of references to previous gender identity will be honoured where legally possible.

## **6.10 Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying and Abuse**

- 6.10.1 UM maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of transphobic, homophobic and biphobic harassment, bullying or sexual misconduct, as well as

discrimination, harm or threat of harm, or any inappropriate language addressed to any members of the UM community.

- 6.10.2 All reports of discrimination, bullying, harassment victimisation or sexual misconduct will be handled according to the UM [Harassment and Bullying policy](#) and [Sexual Harassment policy](#).
- 6.10.3 Zero-tolerance aims to eliminate undesirable behaviour; bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct has occurred, action will be taken.
- 6.10.4 UM students are strongly encouraged to follow the [Good Practice in Inclusive Language](#) guidelines to foster a culture of respect and effective communication.
- 6.10.5 Any individual who witnesses bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct has an obligation to report the incident at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.10.6 Students experiencing trans-related discrimination or misconduct have the right to initiate proceedings under applicable disciplinary codes and regulations. For emotional support and advice students can contact the [Health and Wellness Centre](#).
- 6.10.7 Zero-tolerance aims to eliminate undesirable behaviour among students and means that if bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct has occurred, action will be taken.

## 6.11 Facilities

- 6.11.1 UM is committed in providing gender neutral or gender inclusive spaces representing a sign of inclusion and support to all students.
- 6.11.2 All UM students have the option to choose the restrooms and changing facilities that align with their gender identity. In these circumstances, other students should respect these choices. If necessary, this decision may be communicated to other students upon consultation and with the consent of the gender-variant person concerned.
- 6.11.3 UM provides gender-neutral facilities accessible to students that prefer them to the gendered options. These spaces are not restricted to Gender Variant Persons and are open to all the UM community.
- 6.11.4 Where gender-neutral facilities are not available, UM will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that Gender Variant Persons who do not feel comfortable

with using gender specific facilities, can have access to other safe and comfortable gender-neutral facilities.

## 6.12 Dress Code

- 6.12.1 Dress codes should be arranged in a way that gender stereotypes, or binary gender choices, are not reinforced. Gender Variant Persons should face no obstacle in dressing in a way consistent with their gender identity and gender expression whilst respecting UM dress codes.

## 7. References

- 7.1. Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (Chapter 540) (2015), [Online], Available at <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/540/eng/pdf> [Accessed 29 January 2026].
- 7.2. Good Practice in Inclusive Language Guidelines (2020), [Online], Available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/about/goodpracticeinclusivelanguage.pdf> [Accessed 29 January 2026].
- 7.3. Harassment and Bullying Policy, (2021) [Online], Available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/directorates/hrmd/policies/harassmentandbullyingpolicy.pdf> [Accessed 29 January 2026].
- 7.4 Health and Wellness Centre, [Online], Available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/services/health-wellness/> [Accessed 29 January 2026].
- 7.5 Sexual Harassment Policy, (2021) [Online], Available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/directorates/hrmd/policies/SexualHarassmentPolicy-18Oct2021.pdf> [Accessed 29 January 2026].
- 7.6 Student Solidarity Fund, [Online], Available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/services/studentssolidarityfund/> [Accessed 29 January 2026].

## 8. List of appendices/worksheets

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation

## Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation

**The [Constitution of Malta \(1964\)](#):** In Chapter 4 (32), Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual, it is stated that every person in Malta is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual whatever sexual orientation or gender identity amongst other characteristics. Moreover, it provides protection from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity in the same chapter (45).

**The [Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act \(Cap. 540, laws of Malta\)](#):** This act provides for the recognition and registration of the gender of a person. It also regulates the effects of such a change, as well as the recognition and protection of the sex characteristics of a person.

**The [Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Act \(Cap. 567, laws of Malta\)](#):** The act affirms that all individuals have a sexual orientation, a gender identity and a gender expression, and that no particular combination of these three characteristics constitutes a disorder, disease, illness, deficiency, disability and, or shortcoming. The act prohibits the referral to and, or the performance of conversion practices as a deceptive and harmful act or interventions against a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and, or gender expression.

**The [Criminal Code \(Cap. 9, laws of Malta\)](#):** The code amends and consolidates the Penal Laws and the Laws of Criminal Procedure. In its various amendments it has introduced the terms 'on grounds of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation' in the following provisions:

- article 82A: Criminalising acts of incitement to racial hatred, etc.;
- article 82C: Criminalising the acts of condoning, denying or trivialising crimes against, peace against a group;
- article 83B: Providing for an increase in punishment where offences committed are aggravated by racism or motivated by xenophobia or homophobia; and
- articles 222A/251D/325A: Providing for an increase in punishment for related offences in certain cases.
- *Note that hate crimes on the grounds of gender expression and sex characteristics are covered under Cap. 540.*

**The [General Data Protection Regulation \(Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679 – “GDPR”\)](#) and the [Data Protection Act \(Cap 586, laws of Malta\)](#):** Gender identity and expression is Special Category data protected under Article 9 of the GDPR, and requires explicit informed consent from the data subject for the processing of such data.