

Understanding Gender Equity & Diversity at Pearson College UWC (for Host Families)

This is a user-friendly guide designed to help in the **learning, understanding, and everyday practicing** of gender equity and diversity here in our Pearson College UWC community — including your homes.

Why is this important?

We believe all individuals — no matter their race, ethnicity, nationality, beliefs, language, sexuality, or gender identity — have a right to be treated with **equal respect** and **equal opportunity**.

The framework offered here is not only useful for everyday practice but offers critical tools in contextualizing and honouring the incredible diversity of our community.

What does this mean for my role?

Host families are an *essential* connection for our campus to the greater local community and it is vital that our host families understand *and* embody the values of our college.

This guide is designed to **share, teach, and empower** gender equity and diversity for all.



What is Gender Diversity?

Gender diversity is an umbrella term that is used to describe gender identities that demonstrate **a diversity of expression beyond having to choose to express oneself as either male or female — the gender binary.** **This diversity also extends to folks who do identify as male or female, but do not agree with the “traditional” standard of what this means in society.*

Key Points

- ✓ Every individual has **a right to be referred to by the name and gender pronoun of their choice.**
- ✓ Presenting as gender diverse is **not** about attention seeking or receiving special treatment — **it is about embracing one's authentic self.**
- ✓ This information can be difficult to process for some and that's okay. There is *not* a need for people to know about every gender identity. What is more important is that people **respect that you are gender diverse and accept individual choices anyone can make about their life and their identity.**
- ✓ Using correct names and pronouns for gender diverse people, as well as gender neutral language are reasonable expectations that is inclusive to gender diverse people.



What are pronouns?

Pronouns are words that are used in the place of names to refer to an individual. If you say “That’s Eric. He is nice,” the word “he” is the pronoun, which is being used in place of “Eric”. Simply, pronouns are how we want to be talked about by others.

It is best practice to ask someone what their pronouns are and exemplify this in introducing yourself with pronouns as well.

“Hi, my name is Laurie — I use “she/her” pronouns, who are you?”

Often, people make *assumptions* about the gender of another person based on the person’s appearance, voice, or name and assign gendered pronouns accordingly, like calling someone with short hair and a beard “he”, or someone else “she” because they’re wearing a dress or skirt — this is **not** ideal.

***Pronouns — like names — are part of someone’s identity and are meant to be empowering not confusing.**

That said, it is okay to get pronouns wrong but do apologize and ensure you correct yourself moving forward.



Alright, I get pronouns but...why “they/them”? Isn't this a plural pronoun? I'm confused.

With the complexity and limited nature of the English language, it is often difficult to refer to someone without using gender, but it is widely accepted that **“they” or “them” can be used as pronouns for someone without delineating that person in the gender binary (men and women).**

Although an individual may identify using “they/them” as their pronouns in order to identify outside of the gender binary — not as traditionally male or female — it is also **recommended to use “they/them” pronouns for any person before you have confirmed their pronouns and gender identity by them, or a trusted source beforehand.**

*** If this is difficult to understand or put into use, consider how we already use these pronouns casually in everyday conversation when we see someone who we cannot easily “identify”, ex:**

“Do you see that person over there? They're wearing a blue cardigan and have a laptop with a little smiley face on it. Who are they?”



“I didn’t grow up with this; why does this matter?”

The **assumptions we make about others’ identities are not always correct**, and the act of assuming sends a potentially harmful message that people have to look and/or sound a certain way to demonstrate who they are — or aren’t.



Again, this is **not** only for gender diverse individuals, including those who identify as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming, but for **all genders / everyone**.

We all experience gender differently; there is no one way to be a man or to be a woman, or anything varying from this. **Misgendering or pressuring someone** to behave in a specific way to their gender can be particularly **harmful or anxiety-producing** — especially for young people.

Our students, like most humans, are still **discovering who they are and what it means to be themselves**.

* **Even if you find all of this to be confusing and difficult to understand, it’s all about staying in the attempt and showing that you care and respect all students no matter who they are or how they identify.**

It’s okay to make mistakes — we’re all learning.

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