

Tips and Wishes for Dealing with LGBTQIA*+ Identities at the University

Respectful and considerate conduct at university is key for a productive and appreciative study experience. Misunderstandings often arise unintentionally but can be avoided with a little context and information. To provide some of that context, this document was compiled with a few pointers for avoiding discrimination against queer¹ people in everyday university situations.

This collection is in by no means exhaustive and can not be applied to all contexts or situations in the same way. Rather, it is meant as an invitation to reflect on your behaviour towards queer people and to better understand that perspective.

Be aware that there are probably queer people present in all of your classes, even if they are not outed or vocal on queer topics. Queerness is not distinguishable by outward appearance.

Addressing students inclusively (both face to face and in written communication) is a good baseline for a positive and constructive teaching and learning environment. You can easily signal openness and respect towards the gender identity of others by introducing yourself with the pronouns you use and encouraging others to do the same. You can also add them to the signature line of your emails. In doing so, you help make this a natural part of introductions and, in the process, take the attention and pressure to explain away from individuals who are forced to do so because of their gender identity or expression.

To avoid forcefully outing someone, ask students how they want to be addressed before the class starts. This is most easily done in a short email. All names on course rosters at LMU have to correspond with the one on a ID card or passport. Under current law, official name changes for trans* people are only possible after a very time-consuming and expensive process. So many trans* students are confronted with their deadname (wrong first name) daily. This can be very painful and traumatising for those affected. Because of that it is integral to ask for, respect and correctly use the correct name and pronouns of students.

If you are not sure what pronouns a person uses or how to use them you can always use the full name of that person.

If you read course lists call the attendees by their first and last names instead of using "Mrs/Mr". In correspondence you can also just use a person's full name.

¹ Explanation "queer": all people who do not identify as cis-gender and/or heterosexual. Thus "queer" can be an umbrella term for all LGBTQIA*+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, inter*, asexual and others) people. It can also be used as an independent label.

Avoid examples or phrasings that stereotype or pathologise queer identities; that includes, for example, assuming that sexuality and gender are “lifestyle choices”, that all people have a need for romantic or sexual relationships, or that queer identities inherently lead to certain behavioural patterns.

Respond constructively to criticism and requests from your students. Try to understand why criticism was made and reflect on it before you feel personally attacked.

In many fields queer approaches are part of current research, and engaging with them broadens the diversity of perspectives. Therefore, include LGBTQIA*+ issues in your teaching and do not treat them as a rare "curiosity" or niche area that students can only explore on their own if they are interested.

Do not publicly out students.

If you have general questions concerning LGBTQIA*+ topics don't hesitate to ask the Queer-Referat (queer@stuve.uni-muenchen.de). For personal questions toward specific people, please address them privately and respectfully.

Queerness is only one aspect of diversity and potential discrimination. Be aware of other dimensions such as social and ethnic backgrounds, bodily and mental ability, religious context etc.

Even if a mistake is made, there are ways to move beyond it. The important thing is to deal with it in a reflective way and to create a positive atmosphere of togetherness.