

# How you can make the gender question on an application form more inclusive? <sup>1</sup>

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## Background & Context:

In a constantly evolving landscape of identities, the way we understand, define and express gender has changed in both social and legal contexts. The shift from a traditional binary of sex and gender to a more nuanced perspective of gender inclusion has resulted in recent changes to Ontario's Human Rights Code ("the Code") which now distinguishes between sex and gender. The addition of gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination requires consideration of a renewed approach to collecting and analyzing demographic information through surveys.

In its Gender Diversity Policy, Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning and the University of Guelph–Humber ("Humber") articulates its right, as well as legal and moral responsibility, to:

- ensure that all members of the college community are treated fairly, equitably, and respectfully, and
- provide a learning, working and living environment that is free from harassment and discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression.

The Gender Diversity Policy outlines Humber's position on the responsibilities of the College as well as its students and employees with respect to protecting gender expression and gender identity in accordance with the Code. The policy offers the following definitions:

- *Biological Sex*: The sex assigned at birth based on external genitalia but also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels and secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, as well as fat distribution.
- *Gender Identity*: An individual's intrinsic or psychological sense of self, particularly their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither, regardless of biological sex.
- *Gender Expression*: The external attributes, behaviour, or appearance, by which people express their gender and through which others perceive the person's gender. For example, gender expression is related to the way a person dresses, the length and style of their hair, the way they act or speak, the preferred pitch of their voice, and their choice of whether or not to wear make-up.

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Killermann. (2017). *How you can make the gender question on an application form more inclusive*. Retrieved from: <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/06/how-can-i-make-the-gender-question-on-an-application-form-more-inclusive/#sthash.rDLcCzWA.5iRqnjQp.dpuf>

The following samples offer some guidance on how to formulate or pose survey questions related to sex and gender:

1. I identify my sex as:

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- MtF Female
- FtM Male

2. I identify my gender as: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I identify my gender as:

- Man
- Woman
- Trans<sup>2</sup>
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to disclose

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<sup>2</sup> Humber's 2015 **Gender Diversity Policy** defines *Trans\** as an umbrella term used to describe individuals who, to varying degrees, do not conform to what society usually defines as a man or a woman. This term captures the descriptor, "transgender", which refers to individuals whose gender identity is different from their biological sex assigned at birth, and/or whose gender expression is different from the way males or females are stereotypically expected to look or behave. Individuals who identify as *trans\** may do so because they self-identify as a person who is any one or more of the following: androgynous; bi-gender; a cross-dresser; gender diverse; gender fluid; gender non-conforming; genderqueer; gender-transitioning; gender-variant; intersex; pangender; queer; a transman; a transwoman; two-spirit, etcetera.