



the UBC trans & non-binary student guide





Hi there, and welcome to the trans and non-binary student guide! A team of trans and non-binary students at UBC created this guide because we were frustrated with the lack of clear information available to trans and non-binary students to help them access resources and support on campus. This guide is meant to show you some of the great things about UBC and some of the not-so-great things. It's meant to be honest, open, and collaborative. We hope that it offers you some insight into what kinds of support you can receive on campus, what issues you might encounter, what's in progress, and how other students have navigated it all.

We consulted UBC students and included several quotes. Names, faculties, and years have been shared depending on the student's comfort level.

Before we talk about UBC experiences, we would like to acknowledge that UBC Vancouver's campus is located on traditional, ancestral and unceded Musqueam territory. Gender-based and transphobic violence is based in the colonial imposition of a gender binary. As a result, when we talk about trans and non-binary advocacy we recognize that this work is therefore by necessity linked to the ongoing work of decolonization. This guide has been written primarily by two settlers on this land, and as such, we acknowledge the privilege we have, to be living and working on Musqueam territory.

If you are unfamiliar with land acknowledgements, check out [this resource](#) as a starting place.



Student Information Systems	4
Chosen names	4
Pronouns	5
Gender markers	5
First-Year Housing	6
Upper Year Housing	8
Medical Resources in Vancouver	9
Student health	9
Health insurance	9
Transphobia on Campus	11
Tips for the Classroom	12
Tips for the Workplace	13
Tips for Grad Students	14
Thoughts from Fellow Grad Students	14
Bathrooms	15
Getting Involved	16
Miscellaneous Resources	17
Other resources for trans students	17
General UBC resources	17
Where to get gender affirming clothes in Vancouver	18
Websites to share	18
Tips for coming out to your friends and other people at UBC	19
Let's talk about sex	19

student information systems

chosen names

This section is going to go into some of the logistics that will help you settle in at UBC. Starting with chosen names (also called “preferred names” on UBC systems), you can enter or update your chosen/preferred name on the Student Services Centre (SSC) (detailed instructions on the [change your personal information](https://students.ubc.ca/change-your-personal-information) page at students.ubc.ca).

Unfortunately, not all UBC systems are centralized. That means that your chosen name will not always appear in UBC systems and UBC staff might not always know to use it. So, you should expect some inconsistencies, which sucks. The Equity & Inclusion Office recently created trans.inclusion@equity.ubc.ca that students can email to share feedback when systems aren’t working properly, including when chosen names aren’t used, so that they can make UBC systems better.

Generally speaking, you should see your chosen name used consistently at least in the following places:



Canvas
Classrooms (including class lists)
Student Service Centre
UBC card (make a request at ubc.card@ubc.ca)
UBC Recreation
Student Housing and Student Housing Online Service Centre
Counselling Services
Student Health Services
Graduation ceremony (make a request before the deadline [here](#))

If your chosen name is not being used in one of these situations, that’s not normal. If you feel comfortable, chat with your prof, UBC staff, or with the Equity & Inclusion Office to make sure that your chosen name is used.

There are a few places where you should expect to see your legal name because there is a legal requirement for it to be used. At UBC, this includes:



Official letters (including letters of admission, enrollment, and award, as well as student loans)
Tax forms
Transcripts
Diplomas
Residence contracts

If you encounter your legal name in other situations, send trans.inclusion@equity.ubc.ca a message with where the problem is, and they will try to fix it.

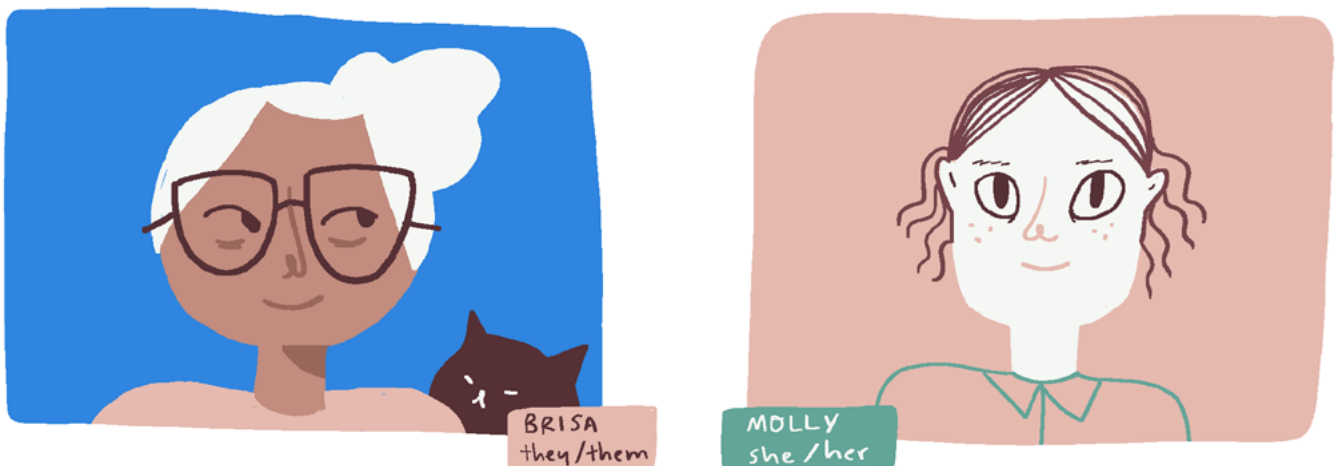
pronouns

Unfortunately, pronouns are not displayed in most systems at UBC. UBC instructors and staff are encouraged to give space for students to share their pronouns, but that doesn't always happen.

As of 2020, students can add pronouns beside their display name on Canvas. At the moment you will have to choose between they/them, she/her, ze/zir/zirs, ze/hir/hirs, and he/him pronouns. The following combinations are also available: "they/them; she/her" and "they/them; he/him". If you use different pronouns, email trans.inclusion@equity.ubc.ca so they can take note of this and push to have your pronouns included as an option.

gender markers

UBC's extremely outdated information system can only record the gender markers M and F. The good news is, if you identify with one of these gender markers, you can update UBC systems to reflect the correct gender information, even if you don't have legal documentation (see instructions on the [Student Services](#) website).



The bad news is, there is currently no way for students who identify outside of the M/F binary to correctly enter their gender information into UBC systems. This option will become available when the new student information system, Workday, is launched in approximately 2023. UBC is working on interim solutions to this problem - if this is a problem you will face, know that you're not alone!

A small piece of good news is that gender markers no longer appear on class lists, so professors don't have access to this information directly. If you encounter instances where your gender marker is being used incorrectly or inappropriately (for example, if an email uses Mr. or Mrs.), email trans.inclusion@equity.ubc.ca so the Equity & Inclusion Office can advocate for more supportive practices.

first year housing

There are three different first-year residence areas: Place Vanier, Totem Park and Orchard Commons. Here are some of the first-year gender-neutral housing options in first year first ranked with our favorites on top:

Single connected housing

1

Single connected housing is when two rooms are connected by a bathroom. All of these floors are mixed gender. The downside is that single-connected is the most expensive option for first year living.

"I was in a connective single set-up and when I was applying for housing I [emailed someone] and said "hey I'm transgender, I would really prefer to have a transgender roommate". And they were like, "there's another person who actually reached out to me, would you like to email them?" So I got [my roommate's] email and [we] emailed all summer long. So that was a really awesome way to meet my roommate. If you email housing they will probably try to make it work for you because there are likely other people who are also emailing housing."

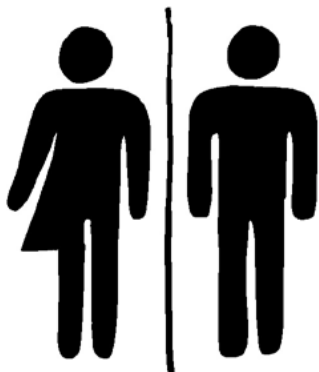
-Martin, 2nd year

ćəsnaʔəm House

2

Totem Park also has another mixed gender building called ćəsnaʔəm House. This building has all single rooms and a "gender inclusive" washroom on each floor. A small detail is that the gender signage is problematic at best.

One side is marked like this:



And the other side is marked like this:





You still have to pick a side, but the half dress, half pants person is supposed to mean that you can choose whatever side you want. For this reason, and the fact that it is somehow more expensive than other singles, it gets a barely passing score.

Shuswap House (Totem), Korea House (Vanier), and Tec House (Vanier)

3

These houses are all mixed gender but have a combination of single and shared rooms. There are two communal washrooms on each floor that are marked with binary signs.

“At the beginning of the year, my RA asked us to do a heads-down vote for whether the washrooms would be gender neutral. A few people were against it so it stayed divided.”

-Sam, 3rd year Arts student

It sucks that gender neutral washrooms in these houses rely on a vote to become gender neutral, and this is something that we hope Student Housing will finally change. In the meantime, while the washrooms are not gender inclusive, there is one gender neutral bathroom on the first floor with a shower that you can get a key to if you talk to the housing office or Residence Life Manager. These buildings are the least expensive of the gender neutral-ish options, but also the most inconvenient.

upper year housing

If you are interested in Upper Year housing, you can apply for either winter session (which functions as a lottery system) or year round, which depends on when you apply. It's best to apply for year-round housing as soon as possible, as it can take a year for you to get to the top of the waitlist.

In terms of housing styles, there are studios, four bedrooms, six bedrooms, and family style for students with partners or children. If you have concerns about living in a communal space due to your gender identity, you can contact Housing and they will try to accommodate you. Their typical accommodation is to put you in a studio, which may or may not be financially feasible (studios tend to be ~300\$/month more). For shared apartments, UBC housing will unfortunately not match you with other trans and non-binary people, so it's up to you to find roommates who you feel comfortable with. If you want to live with roommates in Student Housing, UBC allows you to choose between the two binary M/F options they have provided.

Luckily, there are Facebook Pages such as “**UBC Roommates**” and “**Homes for Queers Vancouver**” to help you find trans inclusive housing, on- or off-campus.



medical resources in vancouver

student health

A perk of UBC-V campus is that we have multiple walk-in clinics nearby. The most convenient is Student Health Services, which is located in the UBC Hospital. Since every experience with healthcare providers is different, here are some student tips for Student Health Services:

"If you just do the random appointments the first few times you can figure out which doctor is best for you. Don't be afraid to trial the different doctors at Student Health."

-Alex, 5th year Applied Science

"It's not as scary as it might seem at the beginning and there are some really fantastic doctors."

-Sam, 3rd year Arts student

"The wait time seems long for Student Health, but if you call them first thing in the morning, they can often get you in on the same day"

-Brett, 5th year Arts student



health insurance

Health insurance for UBC students is provided through Pacific Blue Cross and you'll have speak directly to them to figure out the details of what is or is not covered. The information below is simply meant to give you a sense of what to expect.

Hormones

The AMS/GSS Health Plan covers medications listed in the [BC Fair PharmaCare Formulary](#), including most forms of hormone therapy. A readiness assessment is typically required to begin hormone therapy, which doctors in BC should be able to provide. Three Bridges Community Center is a highly recommended clinic for accessing trans-specific care, and they have an accessible needle exchange service.

Surgeries

MSP (Medical Services Plan) provides coverage for many gender-affirming surgical procedures. The best source of information is the [Trans Care BC website](#). Procedures that are not funded by MSP (such a facial feminization or electrolysis) are not covered by the AMS/GSS Plan. However, you can always request an estimate to confirm whether or not a particular procedure is covered.

Overall, your best source of information regarding trans health care in British Columbia is Trans Care BC. They have lots of information and resources about gender-affirming care (primary care, hormone therapy, and/or surgery) and you can connect with one of their health navigators if you need support navigating the healthcare system or if you are encountering barriers to access necessary care. They can also provide you support in finding a family doctor.

Tips from students about transitioning:

"The best thing to do is to go to [to Student Health] with exactly what you need because they're usually not going to be able to fill in the blanks. I met this doctor and was like "here is the [assessment form]" and he was like "okay let me figure out what to do with this" [because] he'd never received a hormone and surgery readiness assessment- the form basically is like "I've approved this person, they are actually trans." [The doctor] put the referral in. Within a few months I saw an endocrinologist and then 6 months later saw the surgeon."

-Martin, 2nd year

"If you aren't sure just apply. Once you decide, that's when the waiting starts."

-Kip, 4th year Arts

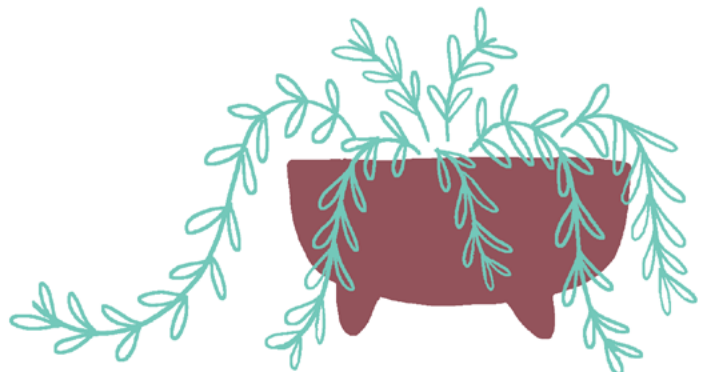
"I started T in high school. So that meant that when I came to University, they immediately got me at the Three Bridges clinic because I had started taking T within the year, and within the first couple years you need to see the doctor every three months to make sure your levels are okay. So I was at a higher priority luckily."

In terms of needles, I'll go to the needle exchange that's downtown next to Three Bridges. I'll just take my used sharps container and throw it away and get a new sharps container. And if you can afford it, I typically just go and buy a bulk pack of needles at shoppers, which they have behind the counter. You can just ask the pharmacist for insulin needles."

-Alex, 5th year Applied Science

"If you can find a family doctor who is trans supportive that might be the fastest way to get care. I was talking to her in March/ early April and then had a blood test by early May."

-Casey, 5th year Math





transphobia on campus

UBC has a lot of issues with transphobia and the climate sometimes doesn't feel very friendly to trans and non-binary people – for example when UBC lets well-known transphobes book space on campus.

“UBC as an institution, up until this point, has failed its trans community by refusing to double down on open hostility and transphobes in public events despite open condemnation by a large core of faculty and students.

That is also reflected in the student body to an extent, but less severely. The student body reflects more [of] the social realities that you, incoming students, are already familiar with, as trans people. There are barriers and obstacles, but we're here to support you through that, resources have been developed for you, we want to meet you, please reach out.”

-KI, Law student

Students, faculty and staff have pushed back overtime and seen some positive changes, but UBC as a whole is slow to make changes and unfortunately, you'll probably be hurt and/or disappointed more than once during your time at UBC.

tips for the classroom

It's also possible you will encounter transphobia in the classroom, at work if you work at UBC, or among your friends and classmates. We wish it could be different, but we figure it's better to be prepared if it happens.

That said, you should never feel like you have to put up with any transphobic behaviour. UBC's anti-discrimination and harassment policy includes gender identity and expression, and there are also lots of people at UBC who are supportive and will help if you need. Don't hesitate to reach out to the [Equity & Inclusion Office](#) if you're encountering issues, especially the [Human Rights Advisor](#). Another helpful resource for both understanding your legal rights and taking action is [Trans Rights BC](#).

Sample email to send a professor at the beginning of the year:

TO: PROF@UBC

SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION :)

Hi [insert prof's name],

I'm really excited to take your class this semester! I just wanted to let you know that I use the pronouns []. I've also added my pronouns to Canvas, and I was hoping that you would be able to support me in class by correcting students if they misgender me in classes /discussions/etc.

Thank you so much in advance for your help in creating a respectful environment.

[name]

[pronouns]



SEND

Here is another sample email you can send you to your professor:

TO: PROF@UBC

SUBJECT: ABOUT MONDAY'S AHIS301 CLASS

Hi [insert prof's name]

I noticed that a student misgendered me [in class, in a discussion board, etc.]. My pronouns are on Canvas and are visible to everyone. I was wondering if as the professor you would be able to correct these types of instances and set an example for what a safe learning community looks like.

Best,

[name]

[pronouns]





tips for the workplace

"1. You are under no obligation to out yourself at work.

2. When you're applying, they aren't going to assume you're trans. Put your preferred name on your resume. The only person that needs to know that I am trans is the person who will deal with my banking.

3. Sometimes it feels overwhelming when you get misgendered in a workplace, but just keep in mind that you are working for these people, they value your work, and they are most likely fairly open and inclusive."

-Martin, 2nd year

tips for grad students

Try to connect with trans and non-binary grad students and faculty members, even if they're not in your home department or even if they go to a different university. Many of the experiences and frustrations that are more specific to being a (trans) graduate student are similar across disciplines, like navigating bureaucracy, working as a Teaching Assistant, finding the right fit for your comps committee, or navigating letters of recommendation. If you feel comfortable, talk to your supervisor early on about the specific supports you might need to navigate grad school as a trans or non-binary person.

There are also a couple of on-campus 2SLGBTQIA organizations (OutLaws and The Network) that are specifically for graduate students. These clubs are great places to start if you are looking to make connections and get involved with campus activities. And of course, it's always a great idea to look outside of academia to connect with other trans and non-binary folks – there are lots of local organizations (e.g., the Vancouver Queer Film Festival) or Facebook groups (“Queer Outdoors Vancouver”) you can join.



“The only difference between undergrad and grad is that for the grad students, it is essential that you build relationships with your peer groups. Go to meetings of the Pride Collective, hit up the Equity & Inclusion Office and make friends there. The isolation you experience is definitely magnified at the graduate level.”

-KI, Law student

“Being a grad student especially now in my PhD. I feel like I’m in this liminal space of being a student but also being an academic. An interesting space to be in where I don’t feel disconnected from students or faculty but I really do at the same time. Can make navigating relations to be a little weird.”

-Alex, Graduate student

bathrooms

UBC campus has gender neutral washrooms located all around campus – the problem is finding them. You can find a washroom map on the Equity & Inclusion website (it's in progress – you can report any error you find), but we have ranked our favourites.

The UBC life building

Floor to ceiling stalls. Multiple entries and exits and regularly cleaned. The Life Building has it all. Located conveniently in the middle of campus, this is the go-to place for students studying on the north side of campus. Make sure to check out the second floor bathrooms, as they tend to be less busy.

The ARC and the Aquatics Centre

If you are interested in athletics, the ARC is one of the gyms on campus that you can go to for only \$35/semester. There are gender neutral change-rooms and bathrooms outside the ARC which don't require membership for use. Also, the Aquatics Centre is completely free for UBC students and has a fully accessible and gender inclusive change room. There is also a lazy river and a hot tub, so this truly is the place to be.



The Nest

The Nest has a gender neutral accessible washroom that you can access on every floor. It's in a very convenient location but can get a bit busy between classes.

Koerner's Library

Spending a late night studying in Koerner's dungeon? There are several gender neutral washrooms throughout the library, and the ones in the basement are almost always empty.

Orchard Commons

Orchard Commons has a gender neutral washroom on the second floor of their commons-block. It is regularly cleaned and is a good place to go if you are studying on the east side of campus.

Buchanan D

Some of us have been in the Faculty of Arts for years and we still don't understand how to navigate Buchanan. There are gender neutral washrooms in Buchanan B, A and D. Slightly below average just for the fact that Buchanan is confusing.

getting involved

Here are a few ways to get involved at UBC. There are regularly new clubs or initiatives that get started, so it's a good idea to check in regularly with the Pride Collective to see what's happening.

Residence Pride Collectives exist in Vanier, Totem Park and Orchard Commons. These collectives are dependent on RA support and unfortunately RA's are not consistently trained on SOGI topics.

"Residence Pride Collectives are a pretty low-barrier way to make friends and eat snacks."
-Sam, 2nd year Arts

UBC Pride Collective hosts events and discussion groups for 2SLGBTQIA+ students on campus.

"Discussion groups are super low barrier and welcoming to people who are questioning. A lot of people I met through the Trans and Gender Identity (TAGI) discussion group."
-Casey, 5th year Math

Student Government: There are lots of leadership opportunities at UBC through the AMS, the Senate or through your faculty.

"There is space in student leadership for trans people. If you are interested in being an elected student leader, you can. I'm not known as the 'trans senator'. You can still be involved without forcing yourself to be tokenized."
-Alex, 5th year Applied Science



miscellaneous resources

other resources for trans students:



TransStudent.org: If you are interested in making institutional change at your school and beyond, this resource provides support for creating change.

The Coalition Against Trans Antagonism (CATA): CATA is a group of trans women, trans femmes, nonbinary people, and cisgender women whose goal is to challenge oppressive ideologies and practices within organizations. We highly encourage you to check out their website, noterfsnoswerfs.com

Egale.ca: Egale has a variety of campaigns to increase awareness, inform public policy and promote human rights and inclusion.

Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity: The CCGSD provides support and programming in the areas of education, health, and advocacy
Gender Creative Kids: This website has resources for college students, such as information about scholarships, healthcare for transitioning, etc.



general UBC resources



The Equity and Inclusion office: As mentioned above, if you need support navigating identity on campus, one of the best resources is the equity website, or the email trans.inclusion@equity.ubc.ca.

The SASC and SVPRO: If you, or someone you know, is a survivor of sexual violence, the SASC and SVPRO are both resources for UBC students.

The AMS Ombuds office can support you if you are in conflict with the university and in need of advocacy support.

UBC Counselling/Counsellor in Residence: If you would like to seek mental wellness support, you can call UBC counselling to make an appointment. If you live in Residence, you can email the counsellors in residence who often have a shorter waiting list.

The Wellness Centre: An awesome place to learn about health and wellbeing, talk to a wellness peer, access resources, etc.



Gears and Queers: A 2SLGBTQIA+ club within the faculty of applied science (but students from all faculties are welcome).

Queer Coded: A 2SLGBTQIA club within computer science (but students from all faculties are welcome)

Outlaws: A 2SLGBTQIA club and advocacy network in the Faculty of Law

The Network: The Network is a way for 2SLGBTQIA+ Grad students to connect with peers. To get involved, email queergrads.ubc@gmail.com.

The Equity & Inclusion Office: regularly runs events called “Get Connected” for specific students, like 2SLGBTQIA+ and BIPOC students. Usually there’s one at the start of every term. Check out their website to see if they have one coming up!

UBC Trans Mentorship: is a student-run program aiming to enhance social opportunities and psychosocial wellbeing for trans, non-binary, genderqueer, and/or Two-Spirit students at UBCO and UBCV. They have rolling applications available [here](#).

where to get gender affirming clothes in Vancouver

“Three Bridges Community Health Centre
Little Sisters
Queer Facebook buy/sell groups
UBC Pride Collective’s Free Clothing Store”
-Kip, 4th Year Arts

off-campus organizations



The Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) aims to support and empower indigenous youth. Within UNYA is their Two-Spirit Collective, which provides support for indigenous youth (ages 15-30) who identify as Two-Spirit, 2SLGBTQIA+ or questioning.

<https://unya.bc.ca/programs/2-spirit-collective/>

QMUNITY is a non-profit organization in Vancouver which provides programming and resources to queer, trans, and two-spirit folks in BC.

<https://qmunity.ca/about/>

websites to share when you don't want to do the emotional labour of educating people:



[Everyday Feminism](#)

[Gladd.org](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[10 ways to step up as an ally to non-binary people](#)

tips for coming out to your friends and other people at UBC



Take it at your own pace. Start with someone you trust and then see how you feel.

Never feel like you are obliged to educate someone or explain yourself. We've included some resources you can send to people who need to do a bit more research about gender identity

You don't have to tell everyone in your life, and you also don't have to feel like you need to change your pronouns, name or look immediately.

Your coming out story is yours, not anyone else's!

"[University Students] have never met you before and you can tell them your name is anything and they won't know what else to call you. I told myself in August that I'm going to use the men's washroom and I'm only going to go by [Martin]."

-Martin, 2nd Year

let's talk about sex

Here are some tips for navigating boundaries that are applicable to anyone interested in having sex.



Communicate: don't be afraid to tell your partner what you like and what you don't like.

Sex is different for every person and there is no better or worse way to have sex. Do what feels good.

It's okay to feel self-conscious – talk to your partner about what language you'd like them to use during sex and what would make you the most confident.

Make use of UBC resources, like the sex toy shop at the Wellness Centre.

