Gender-neutral Toilets FAQ

What are gender-neutral toilets?
Gender-neutral toilets (GNTs) are toilets and/or bathroom facilities which do not have gendered signage and which do not require the person using them to define into a gender. Rather than being unisex (both male and female), gender-neutral toilets assign no gender whatsoever to people using them.

Who uses gender-neutral toilets?
The simple answer is anyone! That is the whole point of ‘neutralising’ the gendered signage on the doors of the toilets. They can be used by anyone, regardless of gender, without fear of incident, discrimination or harassment.

Often, a gender-neutral toilet is a positive choice for those with more ambiguous gender presentation or those who do not fit into the rigid categories of looking like a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’. People with a more ambiguous gender presentation can be subject to discrimination whichever gendered toilet they use, and therefore a gender-neutral toilet can provide a safer alternative to traditional male and female toilets. These people may or may not identify as trans*, or as LGBT.

Some trans* people identify outside of the gender binary, and choose not to define their gender as either a man or woman. Having gender-neutral toilets ensures that these people will not be forced to choose the ‘best option’ toilet instead of one they actually feel comfortable with.

Will the new gender-neutral toilets replace gendered toilet facilities?
No, gendered toilet facilities will continue to be available as some people may feel uncomfortable using gender-neutral toilets due to, for example, religious or cultural reasons. Currently only single cubicle toilets (i.e. facilities with their own sink/hand dryers etc.) and some disabled access toilets are being converted into gender-neutral toilets. Multiple toilet facilities will continue to be gendered. Disabled access toilets where there is a hoist or where there are specific identified users with special access needs, will not be converted.

The design planning for new builds will include gender-neutral toilets in the form of single cubicles with their own sink/hand dryers etc. Recent new builds such as the Student Centre at our Grand Parade Main Building have already included this design.

Where will the new gender-neutral toilets be located?
The aim is to have gender-neutral toilets available in every building on all sites by the end of April 2016. A list of the locations of the toilets will be available on the University website.

The gender-neutral toilets can be identified by signage showing a symbol of a toilet and the line ‘For everyone.’

Why is the University developing gender-neutral toilets now?
Consultation and research with University staff and students who identify as trans*, non-binary (i.e. they identify outside of the gender binary) or who have ambiguous gender presentation, has highlighted gendered toilets as a key space where they often feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Research into trans* people’s experiences in Brighton and Hove (Browne et al 2015) found that gendered toilets is a particular problem for trans* students, with one respondent saying:

“Gender segregated toilet facilities presented a day-to-day struggle for me [at university], causing me to skip days for fear of being ridiculed for my appearance or being told that I was using the ‘wrong’ toilet, no matter which toilet I used” (Browne et al 2015: 40)
A small research project carried out by Student Services into trans* students’ experiences at the University also found that trans* students often felt uncomfortable and unsafe using gendered toilets, with one student saying that they would avoid using the toilet all day at university and wait until they got home instead, which of course led to a lot of discomfort and pain.

Both research studies found that the provision of gender-neutral toilet facilities was the best way to tackle the problems trans* people faced when using gendered toilets, and to make trans* people’s lives safer and easier.

**Who was consulted and involved in developing the proposal for gender-neutral toilets?**
The LGBTQ+ Staff Network developed the proposal after consulting with staff in the network and LGBrighTon, the LGBTQ+ Student Society. LGBrighTon, the Students’ Union, Student Services, and Estates and Facilities were involved in developing the proposal and were co-sponsors of the final proposal. The Disability and Dyslexia Team, and the Disability Staff Network were also consulted about the possibility of some disabled access toilets being converted into gender-neutral facilities.

The final proposal was presented to the University Equality and Diversity Committee, Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Debra Humphris, in January 2016, where it was approved. It was then ratified by the University Management Board.

**Where can I find out more?**
For more information about the development of gender neutral toilets at the University please contact [equality@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:equality@brighton.ac.uk)

If you would like to comment on the university’s plans please go to staffcentral’s discussion board on the home page.

For further information about gender-neutral toilets and trans* equality in higher education, go to:
- [http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/inclusive-environment/providing-support/trans-people/](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/inclusive-environment/providing-support/trans-people/)
- [https://aroundthetoilet.wordpress.com/participant-information/](https://aroundthetoilet.wordpress.com/participant-information/)
- [http://nusdigital.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/17329/0ceb1f1afdd722dfe0a16047f4a9c30/2009_LGBT_gender%20neutral%20toilets%20briefing.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1457364835&Signature=8FzVggKO0k8kIoF%2B%2BWMoqbKd0%3D](http://nusdigital.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/17329/0ceb1f1afdd722dfe0a16047f4a9c30/2009_LGBT_gender%20neutral%20toilets%20briefing.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1457364835&Signature=8FzVggKO0k8kIoF%2B%2BWMoqbKd0%3D)

**Terminology**
A majority of the population are ‘cisgender’ or ‘cis’ - that is, identifying as the gender which they were assigned with at birth. However, a growing proportion of the population do not identify as the gender which they were assigned at birth. Such identities can include (but are by no means limited to) transsexual, transgender, trans, intersex, genderqueer, agender, non-binary and bi-gendered. Following trends in academia, activism and community work, the term ‘trans*’ is used here to refer to a wide array of gender identities, including those listed and others.