



Diversity Strategy – Equal Opportunities at Technische Universität Berlin

1. Content

1. Mission Statement	3
2. Diversity at TU Berlin	3
3. Objectives in the Fields of Action	7
Participation & Organization	8
Teaching & Learning	8
Research.....	8
Work Culture and Staff Recruitment & Development	9
Organizational Culture	9
4. Areas of Focus 2020 – 2022	9
Social Background (First Generation).....	10
Gender Diversity	10
5. Appendix	12
Annotations	12
References.....	14

1. Mission Statement

Technische Universität Berlin is committed to the goals of equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination. The University is nevertheless aware that any organization founded upon rules and regulations, such as an institute of higher education where people work, teach, study and research together, can never be completely free of discrimination and inequality but can rather only strive to be as critical of discrimination as possible and to achieve the highest possible level of equality. To do so requires continuous critical self-reflection and conscious further development towards becoming an inclusive institution.

With this in mind, diversity at TU Berlin is understood in terms of commitment, opportunity and potential and describes the diversity of its members in terms of their social attributions; attributions which are often associated with discrimination such as age, disability and chronic illness, ethnic origin, gender, social background, sexual orientation as well as religion and political or other opinion. Diversity embraces the eclectic ideas, talents and experience of all the University's members and the contribution they make to TU Berlin both in terms of their various approaches to work and in the range of issues addressed, research undertaken and programs taught.

In order to achieve the greatest possible equality of opportunity, TU Berlin and all its staff and students are committed to a respectful and sensitive approach in their dealings with one another, to breaking down barriers and providing protection from discrimination as well as creating the necessary conditions for a fair right of participation in university life and in the process of shaping the University. Equal opportunities and protection from discrimination are fundamental principles informing the treatment of not only the University's members but also prospective students, applicants, guests, the public, graduates, and partners.

By applying these principles, TU Berlin pursues the goal of being an inclusive institution. This means constantly striving to actively dismantle barriers, mechanisms of exclusion, and discrimination and encouraging members to develop their abilities and participate in university life. Our aim is for all members of the University to be able to recognize discrimination and take active measures to combat it whenever it occurs.

2. Diversity at TU Berlin

Efforts to develop diversity skills and to break down discrimination are based on the understanding that the institutional and social structures, actions, and communication or evaluation processes of an organization such as TU Berlin are often founded on an (unconsciously) accepted standard¹ which often does not do justice to the diversity of people, their circumstances, and their needs (see also Annotation 1).

This (re)produces a number of unintentional mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination affecting all those not actually conforming to the accepted standard. This runs counter to the University's commitment to the principles of equality and freedom from discrimination. Such mechanisms of exclusion also prevent the full development of potential in our academic and academic support work.²

Adequate protection from discrimination and the right to equal opportunities are universal human rights enshrined at all levels in numerous legal norms and the legal principles of international human law, European law³, and German constitutional law,

¹ e.g. Klein, Heitzmann, 2012.

²ibid.

³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), UN Convention on Racial Discrimination (1965), UN Convention

federal⁴ and state⁵. Article 3 of the German Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, background, ethnicity, disability, language, origin, religious belief or political opinions. This constitutional principle is taken up in the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG), which became effective in 2006 to prevent and eradicate discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual identity.

Universities have a particular responsibility to observe the constitution's equality directive (article 3) and uphold the universal right to education (Universal Declaration on Human Rights, article 26). The *Hochschulverträge* (University Agreements) of 2018 – 2022 also require Berlin universities to consolidate their measures for combating discrimination and achieving equal opportunities as part of a diversity strategy, thus working towards achieving a diversity-sensitive environment where people can study, research and work free from discrimination. In addition to the dimensions addressed in the General Act on Equal Treatment (ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual identity), the measures to be pursued by universities should also focus on discrimination people experience due to their social background.

For TU Berlin, this means that diversity and equal opportunities need to be made essential strategic core issues of the University's development to

- enable the maximum personal and professional growth of its members as well as their full participation in University activities
- enable TU Berlin to be an accessible and attractive institution for the best minds, particularly those who broaden the implicit standard
- achieve societally relevant and sustainable results in research and teaching that take account of and consistently integrate heterogeneity and the complexity of the modern world and its societies

Diversity and equal opportunities are thus not merely symbolic issues of little real-life relevance. They are of fundamental importance to TU Berlin in order to fulfill its responsibilities as a university, measure up to its responsibility toward society, and further define and strengthen its profile as a university of excellence.

Accordingly, TU Berlin incorporated its aim to be an inclusive and participatory institution dedicated to pluralism in its *Mission Statement* in 2011⁶. By signing the *Charta der Vielfalt* (Diversity Charter)⁷ in 2013, it further committed to making diversity a strategic field of action in its organizational development. This field of action has now been declared a strategic cross-cutting theme in TU Berlin's *University Strategy* and its *Structural and Development Plan* and as such forms the basis for further development.

The topics of diversity and equal opportunities are thus anchored in the University management under the stewardship of the vice president for strategic development, junior scholars, and teacher education,

on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), European Convention on Human Rights (1950), Treaty on the European Union (1992), Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), Equality Framework Directive 2000 (2000/78/EG), Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (54/2006/EG), etc.

⁴ German Constitution Article 3 subsections 2 and 3, Article 34 (1949), General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) (2006), Federal Act on Gender Equality (2015), etc.

⁵ Constitution of Berlin articles 10 and 11 (1995) Berlin Gender Equality Act (2006), Berlin Gender Mainstreaming Act (2002), Berlin Participation and Integration Act (2010), Berlin Act on Equal Treatment of Persons of Different Sexual Identity (2004).

⁶ Available online: https://www.tu-berlin.de/menue/ueber_die_tu_berlin/gesetze_richt_leitlinien/leitbild_der_tu_berlin/.

⁷ Available online: <https://www.charta-der-vielfalt.de>.

supported by the Office of the Main Women's Representative with Strategic Controlling providing conceptual, coordinative, and practical guidance.

Assessment and Strategy Development

In preparation for the development of the Diversity Strategy, actors in this area were identified and brought together in the Diversity Working Group (see Annotation 2), existing offers and needs were assessed, and information and discussion sessions on different dimensions of diversity⁸ were offered for the entire University body.

The findings obtained from research, experts, and discussions across the University as well as the responses provided by the feedback form on the TU diversity webpage⁹ concerning University members' experiences or impulses for diversity policies build the foundation for the following assessment and the resulting aims for this strategy development.

The assessment of the situation regarding diversity and people's experiences of discrimination at TU Berlin confirms that numerous central and decentralized institutes and actors are already addressing one or more aspects of diversity in various fields of action. The Staff Council, Staff Council for Student Assistants, Coordinating Office for Women's Advancement and Gender Equality and women's representatives in the faculties, Office of Staff with Disabilities, anti-discrimination officer, Family Services Office, Academic Advising Service, advisory service for parenting students, Representative for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illness, Family Services Office, advisory services for international students and refugees, Psychological Counseling, Department of International Affairs, Social Counseling for Staff, the General Students' Committee (AStA), and countless other initiatives and services provide a broad network of both target group-specific and cross-target group contacts, knowledge holders, representatives, measures, and offers at TU Berlin. Similarly, diversity and discrimination are topics addressed in the research and teaching undertaken by eminent experts at TU Berlin.

However, the wide range of actors involved and the de-centralized structure of the University also give rise to a need for action which is to be addressed within the framework of this strategy. The responses received from members of the University reveal a need for integrated offers and a clear strategy regarding the organization of activities in terms of both structure and content.

Diversity and anti-discrimination are not yet systematically embedded into the University's organizational and controlling instruments. A structured approach to development will help the entire University to align itself to the goals of diversity and anti-discrimination and achieve the general conditions necessary to create an institution based on the principles of diversity, inclusion, opportunity and potential.

The systematic approach pursued in the areas of gender equality and internationalization can be viewed as exemplary in this respect. The strategic focus on these topics has already enabled important steps to be taken towards more comprehensively understood equal opportunities and has proven successful in this area for some time. These efforts are to be systemically pursued – integrated with and supplementing the Diversity Strategy.

The assessment of the current situation provides important information regarding future fields of action to be addressed as part of the Diversity Strategy. This refers particularly to social background and gender diversity but also includes diversity competence and sensitization; prevention and dealing with discrimination; advising and information offers (multilingual); comprehensive disability accessibility as well as the wish expressed by many TU members for more networking opportunities on these topics.

In response to these findings and the urgency of the social-political situation, TU Berlin is seeking to develop its Diversity Strategy across a range of issues and create the right actions to do so.

⁸ "Get connected..." event series, previous events available online: <https://www.tu-berlin.de/index.php?id=186824>.

⁹ Online form (German/English) available: <https://www.tu-berlin.de/index.php?id=185420>.

Approach: Intersectionality and Diversity Mainstreaming

TU Berlin's Diversity Strategy pursues a primarily intersectional approach spanning multiple dimensions. Measures will not be designed for only a single specific dimension of diversity (age, disability and chronic illness, ethnic background, sex, social background, sexual orientation, religion or belief system). Rather, the focus will be on developing measures that dismantle barriers and improve conditions for people for whom different or multiple dimensions of diversity apply.

In addition to the assessment findings, the current state of research also indicates that measures which exclusively focus on individual target groups with specific dimensions of diversity often do not meet the needs of the individual arising from a multitude of individual and social framework conditions. Rather, such measures carry the risk of essentializing (reducing individuals to a specific characteristic), reproducing stereotypes, or stigmatizing people along certain diversity dimensions. Intersectionality also implies that unequal treatment and inequality are often not isolated phenomena in a single diversity dimension, but that the attribution of multiple dimensions to an individual can alter and exacerbate their discrimination experiences.¹⁰

In light of this, TU Berlin strives – with the vision of being an inclusive organization oriented and sensitive to diversity – to adapt its processes and control instruments as needed in favor of mainstreaming and introduce auxiliary diversity reporting. The Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA, see Annotation 3) instrument shown in Image 1 enables existing and proposed structures, processes, and decisions to be examined in terms of their impact on equal opportunities. This will enable actors and institutions to more easily design their planned and existing measures, strategies, and services on the basis of anti-discrimination and sensitivity to all diversity dimensions. Equally important are a University-wide provision of information, sensitizing TU Berlin's members to these issues and the comprehensive development of diversity and anti-discrimination competence within the University's various units.

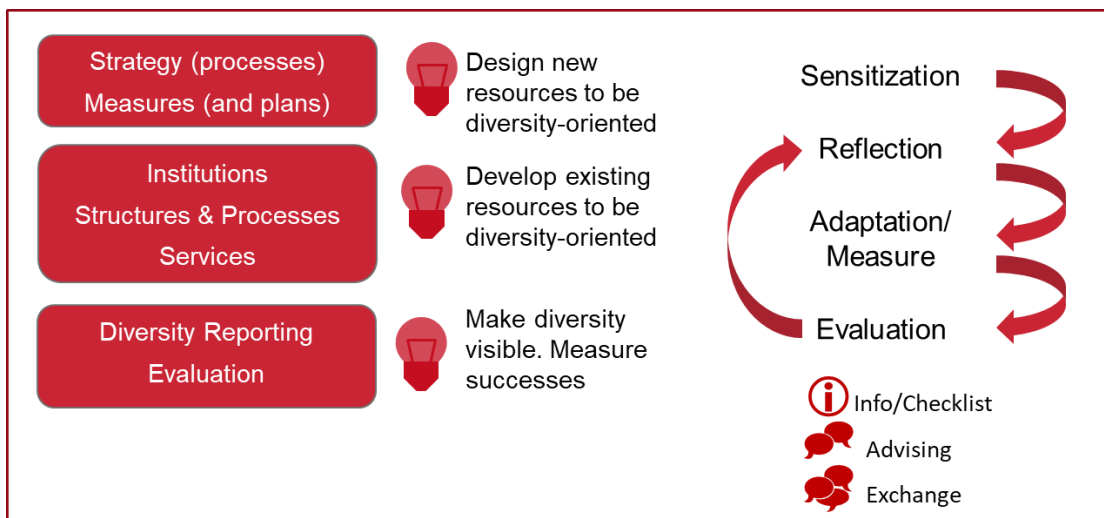


Image 1: Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA).

Target-group specific measures are not excluded by this cross-dimensional approach but rather are applied where they can help remove blind spots in the cross-dimensional promotion of equal opportunities at TU Berlin. Issues for which particular needs can be identified are to be treated as “areas of focus” and given special consideration for a period of time as part of the implementation of the diversity strategy (see also Chapter 4).

Image 2 shows how, in the interests of diversity mainstreaming, diversity aspects will be integrated into the key fields of action of University development. Supplementing this, focus themes will address specific issues for determined periods of time. These activities are accompanied by diversity reporting,

¹⁰ Klein, Heitzmann, 2012; Klammer, Ganseuer, 2015.

which aims to collect findings about the diversity of TU Berlin and its members, provide summative evaluations of existing measures and present the effects of the measures conducted.



Image 2: Implementation of the Diversity Strategy at TU Berlin.

TU Berlin's diversity strategy is thus to be viewed as supplementing the existing gender equality and internationalization strategies. In the process, synergies are used and coordinated among each other. Similarly, close integration with other strategic processes and action plans is proposed in order to foster diversity sensitivity through all fields of university activity in the interest of mainstreaming.

3. Objectives in the Fields of Action

Technische Universität Berlin is committed to the goals of equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination. In pursuit of the goal of becoming an inclusive institution, the University is continuously striving to effectively and sustainably dismantle barriers, exclusion mechanisms and discrimination. TU Berlin regards diversity as a strategic cross-cutting theme, not only for the purpose of achieving equity for and fulfilling its responsibilities towards its members but also because this is key to its successful development in all its fields of action. This not only makes TU Berlin attractive and accessible to the best minds from a variety of backgrounds, it also provides the right framework for them to fully develop personally and professionally and attain optimal results in their studies, research, and work. Sustainable success and societal relevance can only be achieved in the University's core tasks such as teaching, research, and scientific support work when these activities take account of the heterogeneity and complexity of modern societies.

The central objectives of the strategy for diversity and equal opportunities

- Mutually respectful and sensitive conduct among members of the University
- The dismantling of barriers and the creation of equal opportunity
- Supporting members of the University to fully develop their abilities
- Enabling contributions to and participation in shaping the University

extend to all of TU Berlin's areas of action and responsibility.

Participation & Organization

Participation and Committees

- TU Berlin strives for **inclusive participation formats** (and variety of participation formats) and a **debate culture sensitive to diversity**.

Advising and Information

- TU Berlin's advising and information offers are designed and advertised to reflect an awareness of prejudice and sensitivity to diversity. The University provides courses and programming to ensure continuing education in this area.
- Both target-group specific and general **advising services** are centrally advertised so they can be **easily found** and contacted by TU members.

Prevention & Anti-Discrimination

- TU Berlin is developing a **code for mutually respectful and sensitive conduct among members of the University**.
- In the event of **experienced discrimination**, all TU members are to have access to **assistance and support**.
- In **cases of conflict**, **support structures** and processes are available to those affected.

Diversity-Oriented Organizational Development

- **Diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination** will be systematically integrated as guiding principles of action in **steering mechanisms, regulations, and (University-wide) strategy processes**.

Teaching & Learning

- TU Berlin creates **non-discriminatory study conditions sensitive to diversity**, fosters **prejudice-conscious support**, and advances the improvement of the didactic **quality of teaching to reflect heterogeneous student groups**.
- TU Berlin is an institution where students not only acquire excellent technical qualifications but also **social skills and a sense of responsibility** and the ability to contribute to overcoming great societal challenges. **Diversity aspects** should therefore be reflected as widely as possible **in the University's curricula**.
- TU Berlin is also visible to **prospective students and external partners** as a **diverse** institution dedicated to **equal opportunities and educational equity** that offers outstanding educational possibilities.

Research

- Diversity aspects are to be applied in **all phases of the research cycle**. TU Berlin seeks the participation of members of the University as well as society as a whole in its objective to develop solutions to societal questions and aims to broadly disseminate these throughout society through a **wide range of trans- and interdisciplinary approaches, research questions reflecting diversity**, and **diverse teams**.
- At TU Berlin, **excellence in research** means creating the conditions for equal opportunities and helping all researchers to **develop their full potential**.

Work Culture and Staff Recruitment & Development

Work Culture

- TU Berlin considers its employees' **different needs** in the **organization of their duties** and ensures an **appreciative working environment where discrimination exists at as low a level as possible** in which individual responsibilities and realities of life are reconciled with organizational aims as best possible. **Corresponding qualification and sensitization measures** are to be implemented across the University. Management behavior is consistently and explicitly aligned to these aims.

Staff Recruitment and Development

- In its **staffing procedures and staff development** offers for scientific, scientific support, and student support staff, TU Berlin aims for **equal opportunities and the dismantling of discriminatory structures**. **Staff recruitment free of prejudice with transparent, structured procedures distinguishes** TU Berlin's diversity-oriented staffing policy.

Organizational Culture

Communication

- TU Berlin strives to use **images and texts reflective of its sensitivity towards issues of diversity and discrimination** in **documents**, on its **website**, and other media.
- The University is mindful to **appropriately address all genders** in its internal and external communication.

Diversity Skills and Sensitization

- Comprehensive and accessible **information services** enable **all TU members** to strengthen their **awareness and knowledge** of diversity.
- **Sensitization** and the development of **diversity skills** are systematically integrated into the **(continuing) education offers** for all University members.

Infrastructure

- Disability **accessibility** and the application of other diversity-oriented approaches (**family friendliness, avoidance of anxiety-inducing spaces and sources of danger**) are central elements of **infrastructure planning and development as well as building and IT management** at TU Berlin.

Networking & Community Building

- TU Berlin welcomes and promotes its members' **initiatives to network, self organize, and provide mutual support** in diversity-related topics (community building).
- As a **member of society**, TU Berlin's **external actions reflect diversity consciousness** and the principles of **equal opportunities**.

4. Areas of Focus 2020 – 2022

Within the framework of its diversity strategy for diversity mainstreaming, which is primarily designed to address diversity across all its dimensions (see also Chapter 2), TU Berlin recognizes the need to grant individual aspects of diversity special focus. For this purpose, areas of focus are to be defined for a

period of two years each. During this time, TU Berlin will dedicate itself to certain topics, both in its internal discourse and in targeted measures, to address any shortcomings and sensitize University members to these topics.

On the basis of the needs identified in the assessment in Chapter 2, TU Berlin will focus on the following areas in the coming years:

Social Background (First Generation)

The relationship between social background and education is extremely pronounced in Germany and already manifests itself in the results achieved by school students.¹¹ This relationship persists at the university level where social background influences the central circumstances of prospective, new, and experienced students.

Investigations show that people from non-academic families (where neither parent attended university) – if they even choose to study at university – often pursue shorter/more application-oriented degree programs (safety motive), are less mobile (inter)nationally (university location, stays abroad), and more often report uncertainty during orientation and planning processes in their studies and further career plans (e.g. plans to pursue a doctoral degree) than their fellow students with parents holding a university degree. To summarize, students from academic households pursue university studies and subsequent related decisions with a greater sense of security and “naturalness”.¹²

Studies in Germany show that in the period following completion of a first university degree, there is a significant, and recently growing, phenomenon of divergence with a more pronounced underrepresentation of academics from so-called lower educational backgrounds both in the postgraduate phase as well as among professors than during undergraduate studies, while the percentage of people from academic households continues to grow disproportionately.¹³

TU Berlin currently has little data available on the social background of its students and staff and possible experiences of discrimination relating to their social background (see Annotation 4). However a growing number of actors and University offices and projects are recognizing and responding to needs related to social background. Responses from TU members at events and in the online feedback form indicate that there is still room for action regarding social background in the University’s diversity work. In light of this, TU Berlin aims to take a systematic look at this diversity dimension and pursue the resulting measures.

Gender Diversity

The binary gender model firmly rooted in numerous regulations, structures, processes, and areas of society, which exclusively and unambiguously treats gender as male or female, can lead to diverse forms of discrimination and marginalization of those people whose (body and) sexual characteristics, gender identity, or gender expression does not match the assignments and expectations raised by these categories. At the same time, those not identifying with the binary gender model are not a unified group but rather persons with varying situations, social and legal circumstances, experiences of discrimination and marginalization, and needs (see Annotation 5).

At the University, this results in a number of needs for action, including the design of forms and data processing and evaluation systems with regards to gender categories (“diverse” and potentially other entries) or the use of a person’s chosen first name reflecting their own gender identity (before/without a change in the public register) in internal and external communication. Regulations and processes that

¹¹ Czock, Donges, Heinzlmann (2012).

¹² Bargel, Bargel (2010).

¹³ Blome et. al. (2019).

are not adapted often lead to marginalization, discrimination, and, in some cases, significant personal suffering, when, for instance, University members experience an unwanted outing due to the use of a first name in documents, communication, or in front of others that does not reflect their gender identity. Studies also show that beyond structural disadvantages, these people commonly experience direct discrimination including physical violence.¹⁴ It is the University's and its members' responsibility to not only guarantee protection from discrimination and violence but also ensure the sensitization of University members and a culture that reflects and embraces plurality beyond gender categories and heteronormativity.

In this gender diversity area of focus, TU Berlin aims to review its administrative processes for areas requiring change and to inform and sensitize University members to this topic.

¹⁴ Frohn, Meinhold (2017).

5. Appendix

Annotations

Annotation 1:

To illustrate, Vedder (2011) defined a so-called “typical student” using the data from the 19th social survey conducted by the German National Association for Student Affairs (DSW) as: early 20s, single, childless, financially secure, full-time student, academic background. However, the same social survey showed that 20% of students have less than €600/month, 21% work more than 12 hours per week, 25% are older than 25 (and completing their first degree), 5% have children, and 11% have a migratory background.

Annotation 2:

The Diversity Working Group regularly meets every two to three months. Its members are the vice president for strategic development, junior scholars, and teacher education representing University management, members of the Diversity Team (Strategic Controlling), representatives from the Staff Council and Staff Council for Student Assistants, the main women’s representative, anti-discrimination officer, representatives from AStA, a member of the Office of Staff with Disabilities, the representative for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, a representative of the Academic Advising Service, a representative of the Family Services Office, one expert each from the Center for Interdisciplinary Women’s and Gender Studies (ZIFG) and the Center for Research on Antisemitism.

Annotation 3:

A diversity impact assessment (DIA) investigates what effect, for example, a decision, process, or service offer has on equal opportunities with regard to a diverse target group or group of people affected. A DIA can systematically assess both existing and drafted policies, measures, and processes for their effects on diversity and equal opportunities and provide insight/guidance for better design and appropriate adaptation measures. This approach can be used for both central, comprehensive measures as well as individual service offers within the individual units of an organization.

Impact assessments have a long tradition as an (ex ante) instrument for investigating the effect of a policy on a specific topic (e.g. environment, health, social cohesion). Following the successful establishment of the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) in many organizations as a part of gender mainstreaming, a growing number of companies, universities, and political-administrative institutions are now using the DIA as an instrument to improve equal opportunities.

Annotation 4:

Within the Federal Republic of Germany, the results of the 21st social survey of the German Association of Student Affairs (DSK) in summer semester 2016¹⁵ show that 52% of German students are from families in which at least one parent has a university degree. In contrast, 12% are students with no or only one parent who has a vocational qualification and/or higher education entrance qualification (low educational background) and 36% with two parents who have a vocational qualification and/or higher education entrance qualification (medium educational background). If one compares these figures with the educational level of the total population over 15 years of age in Germany (56.3% trade and technical qualification, 17.7% academic degree, 16.7% without a vocational qualification), it becomes clear that students from academic households are strongly overrepresented in higher education.¹⁶ At the same

¹⁵ Middendorff et. al (2017).

¹⁶ Statistisches Bundesamt (2018).

time, according to the social survey, the proportion of students with a so-called low educational background has risen from 9% in 2012 to 12% in 2016, following the sharp drop at the beginning of the 1990s (21% in 1991) and a period of stagnation (10% in 2006/2009).

Annotation 5:

For example, trans* individuals are people who do not (exclusively) identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. These individuals include – but are not limited to – people seeking gender reassignment treatments as well as those who do not want to be definitively gendered either by themselves or others. Using the gender asterisk leaves room for different identities, such as transsexual, transman, transwoman, transident, transgender, etc. Inter*sex persons are people whose anatomy does not fit one of the medical "standard categories" of either "male" or "female" for sex. The term inter* is an umbrella term intended to include all the diverse intersex realities and physicalities.

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