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# DGSS WIL Guide: Guidelines for students

## Regarding Diverse Genders,

## Sexes and Sexualities (DGSS)

This guide is for students participating in WIL who self-identify as DGSS or will be interacting with others who identify as DGSS during their WIL.

The opportunity for students to undertake WIL is a cornerstone of RMIT University's approach to industry relevant education and is central to the student experience. All students, including those who identify as part of the DGSS community, should be supported to undertake WIL that is relevant for their chosen program of study. Regardless of how they identify, students undertaking WIL are encouraged to familiarise themselves with this guide to prepare for a WIL experience where you may engage with DGSS colleagues, employers, communities and customers and where you may self-identify as DGSS.

Get in touch: [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

Find out about DGSS programs, initiatives and support: [www.rmit.edu.au/students/dgss](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/dgss)

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### What are the University's legal obligations around WIL?

RMIT recognises its legal obligations to provide a work and study environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. RMIT also recognises the benefits for the recruitment, retention, innovation, collaboration and productivity of staff and students in an environment that celebrates and welcomes diversity.

RMIT University is proud to support the staff and students within our community who identify as

lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+). Reflecting the diversity of our community beyond the 'LGBTIQA+' label, RMIT refers to people of 'diverse genders, sexes, and sexualities' (DGSS).

This means having access to the same educational opportunities and choices as all other students, including opportunities to participate in WIL as well providing the resources to act as an ally whilst undertaking WIL alongside DGSS individuals and communities.

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## Planning for WIL

While gender identity, sex and sexuality are protected attributes by Australian law, workplaces are still reporting that, while overt racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia are not as prevalent as they were many years ago, workplaces are still challenging environments for many DGSS individuals. WIL is an opportunity to gain new experiences, learn new skills and expand knowledge.

However, undertaking WIL for DGSS students can present a unique set of challenges when it comes to choosing where you might go and how you experience the opportunity.

At RMIT, we would never want anyone to feel like they had to hide who they are or go back into the closet.

For your comfort, we suggest researching where you want to complete your WIL, and considering whether the organisation is openly DGSS inclusive.

## Some things you might want to look into before undertaking WIL:

- Visibility of DGSS identities within the organisation's public profile
- Is there an ally network or equivalent?
- Signaling of allyship (eg. pronouns in email signature, rainbow lanyards)
- Is there support for using a chosen (non-legal) name in systems?
- Gender neutral facilities and uniform/dress code policies
- DGSS training and resources.

Even if the WIL activity does not tick all the above boxes you may still want to continue, and the questions above may help you better prepare for your experience. Many workplaces may be in the early stages of their inclusion journey and a lack of specific inclusion strategies does not equate to discriminatory environments.

## Support for DGSS students

At RMIT we recognise that supporting the DGSS community can require a broader understanding of allyship and a unique set of recommendations. This guide complements other resources to support the student DGSS community. To find out more, including definitions of terms, inclusive language guide and an in-depth look at support offered for both students and staff, visit RMIT's DGSS website. [www.rmit.edu.au/students/support-and-facilities/student-support/diverse-genders-sexes-and-sexualities](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/support-and-facilities/student-support/diverse-genders-sexes-and-sexualities)

There are a number of reasons why you may want to request some changes to your WIL activity. Here are some examples:

- Location of WIL activity: some environments may be considered high risk for DGSS students who, may not feel comfortable undertaking certain WIL activities.  
*For example, a student who identifies as a transgender woman may request to undertake a WIL activity with an organisation that has gender neutral facilities.*
- Using a chosen name: not all systems are set up to support a chosen name and students who have chosen a name for gender affirmation purposes may require a workaround to avoid misgendering and being 'outed' to peers.  
*For example, a non-binary student uses he/him pronouns and uses the name 'Charlie'. Very few people are aware that their legal name is 'Charlotte' and they wish to keep this private whilst undertaking WIL.*
- Scheduling of WIL activity: if a student is in the process of affirming their gender they may be required to attend medical appointments, or may choose to take time off from work and study.  
*For example, a transgender man has top surgery and needs time to recover from the procedure. He may wish to adjust his WIL activity based on recovery and follow up appointments.*

Changes can be requested following a discussion between you and your WIL Practitioner (in most cases this will be the Course Coordinator) and the partner organisation. The WIL Practitioner can facilitate a WIL Activity Planning Meeting with you and/or share details of the recommended changes through email communication. This meeting offers an opportunity for all parties to discuss required changes. If you would like support starting this discussion, contact RMIT's Advisor Diversity and

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Inclusion who can help you with anything from writing an email to joining meetings with you. For more information, contact your Course Coordinator, WIL Champion or the WIL administration team in your School.

## Disclosure and confidentiality

To implement changes to your WIL activity, the University requires written content to discuss the nature of the requested changes with the partner organisation. You are under no obligation to disclose your DGSS identity to anyone. If you decide to disclose to the WIL Practitioner in order to discuss the impact of your DGSS identity on a WIL activity, this information should not be released to partner organisations without written consent. Sharing of personal information is a personal decision and individuals should be placed under no pressure to disclose. RMIT's Advisor Diversity and Inclusion is available to discuss with you the pros and cons of disclosure. The same considerations are applied to working with a colleague who identifies as DGSS. If they disclose information about their DGSS identity, keep this information confidential do not assume others are privy to this information.

## What to do if things go wrong during WIL

Despite planning and implementation of changes, it is possible that you may still encounter challenges during WIL regarding DGSS issues or your own DGSS identity. In such cases the following options can be considered:

- Discontinue WIL activity
- Defer WIL activity
- Request further adjustments to support completion of WIL e.g. change WIL location to one with gender neutral facilities.

When considering what option to pursue, the following questions should be considered:

- What is the impediment to completing the WIL activity?
- Can further changes address this impediment?

When a WIL activity is discontinued, you will be provided with an opportunity to develop a plan for completion in collaboration with the WIL Practitioner.

Plan options can include:

- Taking time off to recover
- Undertaking the WIL activity in a different location
- Undertaking an alternative to the WIL activity
- Undertaking a simulated WIL activity.

The formal mechanisms for discontinuation of a WIL activity are:

- Special Consideration
- Late Course Withdrawal without Academic Penalty

What happens if you can't complete the WIL activity?

- WIL courses are assessed and are no different to all other assessed courses - the usual assessment policy and processes must be followed.
- This means that if you do not complete your WIL course assessment (in WIL this may be placement, or group/individual WIL project activity, simulations, etc.) you will fail the course. If you don't do the WIL placement or activity assessment, you will need to repeat, in the same way you would if you missed an exam (note: all Special Consideration processes apply).
- If you think you may not be able to complete the WIL activity, it is important that you contact the Course Coordinator as soon as possible. The Course Coordinator will provide options that may be available as well as review and prepare for the impact that not completing may have on your enrolment and progress.
- If you can't complete your WIL activity and it relates to your DGSS identity you may wish to contact the Advisor Diversity and Inclusion for further support.

## Sample communication on behalf of student:

Dear (insert name),

I am reaching out to you on behalf of (name and student number) who will be commencing their WIL activity in the coming weeks to notify you that their known as name is different from their legal name, for the purpose of affirming their gender.

We have had a discussion in regard to what sort of work we can do to minimise any instances of dead-naming or misgendering and this email is one of the steps in the agreed process.

Please handle this information sensitively and privately to minimise any chance of (name) being 'outed' to peers. Although (name) is comfortable with this email being sent to managers and their teachers, please do not distribute this information to anyone beyond a need to know basis.

Note also that (name) uses (pronouns) pronouns and where possible we ask that you make the necessary adjustments to ensure that they are addressed by their name and pronouns.

If you have any further questions or would like to learn more about RMIT's

commitment to DGSS inclusion, please don't hesitate to contact [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au).

Thank you in advance.

Please note: you can use this template if you would like to send the communication yourself. Simply change the language to first-person.

## Useful links

- Top Ten Tips to be an Effective Rainbow Ally <http://top-10-tips-for-rainbow-allies.pdf/>
- Top Ten Tips to be an Effective Rainbow Ally: Trans and Gender Diverse Edition <http://trans-top-ten-tips-ally.pdf/>
- Gender Affirmation Guide <http://gender-affirmation-guide-rmit-university.pdf/>
- Inclusive Language Guide <http://guide-to-inclusive-language.pdf/>
- Trans and Gender Diverse at RMIT: [www.rmit.edu.au/tgd](http://www.rmit.edu.au/tgd)
- Student DGSS website: [www.rmit.edu.au/students/dgss](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/dgss)
- Campus map – Gender Neutral Facilities
- DGSS online module [rmit.bridgapp.com/learner/courses/3925/slide/current](http://rmit.bridgapp.com/learner/courses/3925/slide/current)
- Minus 18 <https://www.minus18.org.au/>
- Student WIL website <https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/student-essentials/work-integrated-learning>