



Tohoku University

Live as Who You Are
Guidelines for Gender and Sexual Diversity

National University Corporation Tohoku University

[March 2023]



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I. Tohoku University's DEI Declaration and Basic Principles

Tohoku University has been committed to its foundational “Open Door” policy, accepting a diverse range of people into its community, since its founding in 1907. In 1913, the university was the first Japanese National University to accept female students, and since then it has been striving to create a diverse environment and develop awareness around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In order to recognize the unconscious biases that exist in our daily lives and to protect the dignity of all members of the community, the university established the “Basic Policy on the Protection of Human Rights and the Prevention of Human Rights Violations at National University Corporation Tohoku University” in 2021. This policy seeks to eliminate “any act of discrimination based on social status, lineage, race, creed, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, or unjust discrimination based on any other reasoning” (as defined in the policy’s section 3. Definition of Human Rights Violations). The following year, Tohoku University built upon the existing guidelines and policies and announced its “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Promotion Declaration”. This DEI Promotion Declaration is a commitment to advance ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, to respect the differences of all students, faculty, and staff, and to work collaboratively to create a truly diverse and inclusive environment as an institution.

As gender and sexual diversity has become more widely recognized in recent years, appropriate actions are essential. These guidelines are designed to provide specific examples and responses in order to create an environment in which all students, faculty, and staff respect diverse sexuality in their academic, research, and professional activities. There are still many issues that need to be addressed and considered, and it is also possible that unanticipated issues will emerge in the future. Tohoku University will work with and for all campus members to find ways to solve such issues and challenges, and will make every effort to create a better environment. Furthermore, Tohoku University, in coordination with the Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, will develop and expand various systems and facilities, including a one-stop counseling service, and continue to build awareness among all campus community members.

I. Tohoku University's DEI Declaration and Basic Principles

Tohoku University's basic principles for embracing gender and sexual diversity

- ◆ We respect the equal human rights of all individuals and promote DEI efforts.
- ◆ We promote awareness and the development of an environment and systems to ensure that gender and sexual diversity is respected.
- ◆ We stand by the diversity of gender and sexuality, and do not discriminate individuals based on it.
- ◆ We strive to decrease discrimination caused by gender and sexuality. When a problem cannot be solved immediately, we commit to discussing it and moving forward together in a future-oriented manner.

II. Realizing a Respectful Environment for Gender & Sexual Diversity

1. What is “sexuality”?

Shaped by culture and the times, “sexuality” is a term used to describe the overall nature of human sexuality. It is a social construct, or way of thinking, that has been ingrained in our society. As a construct, sexuality has historically divided people into two sexes, male or female, based on their physical anatomy. In recent years however, this strict either/or binary has been revisited and reconceptualized as a spectrum with a diverse range of identities besides the two conventional options of “male” or “female”.

An individual's sexuality is considered to consist of four elements: **physical sex** (i.e., one’s anatomy, body parts), **gender identity** (one’s own sense of their gender), **sexual orientation** (one’s preference in a sexual partner), and **gender expression** (the way one acts and presents themselves). Sometimes described as having gradation or fluidity, sexuality and its four elements do not need to be either “male” or “female”, but can instead be thought of as a diverse spectrum.

2. Terminology

“LGBTQ+” is a term that collectively describes sexual minorities (e.g. individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning). On the other hand, the term “SOGI” (**S**exual **O**rientation/**G**ender **I**ntity) or “SOGIE” (SOGI + Gender **E**xpression) is used to describe the gender and sexual diversity of all people. In other words, SOGI or SOGIE includes sexual minorities as well as individuals whose assigned physical sex corresponds with their gender identity (i.e. cisgender) and who are attracted to individuals of the “opposite” sex (i.e. heterosexual). In these guidelines, the term SOGI is used as an inclusive term for all people. Please refer to Section V for more terms and definitions.

3. How we respond to gender and sexual diversity

Let’s start by trying to be mindful about gender and sexual diversity. To accept and respect each other’s SOGI, we must become more aware and sensitive to the ways our words and actions that can be prejudiced and discriminatory. Let’s ensure that we help each other to create an environment where everyone can feel seen, comfortable, and safe.

II. Realizing a Respectful Environment for Gender & Sexual Diversity

<Examples>

- Be aware that gender-based statements about appearance such as "that girl over there" or "that male student over there" can be offensive to the individuals being described.
- Tohoku University recommends using the universally applicable "-san" or asking the individual what they would like to be called.
- Do not use discriminatory words, such as "homo" or "lez".
- Be aware that questions such as "Do you have a boyfriend?" or "Do you have a girlfriend?" can be offensive as well. It is important to know that some people are not interested in relationships with the "opposite" sex and to not assume that you know someone's sexual orientation.

4. Addressing unconscious bias

We all have unconscious biases. It is important to understand that we may also have unconscious biases toward individuals with diverse gender and sexual identities. If you notice that others are uncomfortable with your actions or statements, reflect upon and correct them immediately. We can all improve by frequently reflecting on our behavior and communicating in a mutually respectful manner.

5. When someone comes out to you or seeks your advice

"Coming out" is when a person voluntarily shares their gender or sexual minority identity with others. Coming out is not a "must". It is up to the individual to decide whether or not to tell others about their sexuality. The person's decision should be respected. No one should force them to come out.

If a person comes out to you, you should first affirm them and thank them for sharing with you. Faculty and staff who are given such personal information are responsible for keeping the information confidential. If it is necessary to share this personal information with other staff in order to fulfill a desired request made by the individual, discuss and confirm with whom and to what extent the information can be shared with the individual in advance.

If you would like to speak with a counselor about coming out or how to respectfully handle a situation when someone comes out to you, etc., please review the counseling services listed in Section IV.

6. Strict prohibition on outing others

'Outing' is the act of telling and revealing another individual's sexuality to others without the individual's permission. Outing causes great emotional distress to the outed person involved. It must never happen.

II. Realizing a Respectful Environment for Gender & Sexual Diversity

7. Prevention of human rights violations related to gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity

Tohoku University does not tolerate any human rights violations. Human rights violations are defined as “any acts of unfair discrimination or other violations of human rights based on social status, family origin, race, belief, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other reasons” (Basic Policy on the Protection of Human Rights and the Prevention of Human Rights Violations at National University Corporation Tohoku University).

Harassment refers to human rights violations that fall under sexual harassment, academic harassment, and harassment related to pregnancy, childbirth, childcare leave, and family care leave (Regulations on Harassment Prevention at National University Corporation Tohoku University).

SOGI Harassment

Discriminatory language or actions taken related to an individual’s SOGI is referred to as “SOGI harassment”. In 2007, the UN Human Rights Council approved the Yogyakarta Principles, which state that discrimination based on attributes such as SOGI is a violation of human rights. The Council also adopted the “Protection against Violence and Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” in 2016. In Japan, the 2017 amendment to the Equal Employment Opportunity Act enforced that sexual harassment based on SOGI is also a form of harassment.

III. How We Respond

The university is currently taking the following actions regarding sexual diversity and is committed to creating a better environment in the future.

III-1. For Students

1. Can I change my registered name and gender? Yes

Contact: Educational Affairs Section within your department/ graduate school

In principle, the name registered with the university should be the same as the name on the student's family register (hereafter referred to as a "family name"). However, a student can register their preferred name at the time of enrollment or while enrolled at the university, if they understand that they hold full responsibility for changing their registered name and their reason is approved.

If you wish to register your preferred name, you should contact the Educational Affairs Section of your department/graduate school. If you have changed your gender on your family register, you are required to change your gender information on the school register as well.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding changing your registered name or gender at the university, you should contact the Center for Counseling and Disability Services' Counseling Office.

■ How can I change my registered name?

- ① Consult with the Educational Affairs Section of the department/graduate school you belong to about using a different name based on your self-identified gender. The Educational Affairs Section will confirm the reason for the change and will explain the important information and necessary steps to follow.
- ② Submit the following prescribed forms to the Educational Affairs Section of your department/graduate school: 1. Notification of Change to Personal Details and 2. Consent Form After Change.

■ Points of Note

- ※ After you change your registered name, all the certificates and other documents issued by the university will be issued under the newly registered name due to the university's system. Please note that you will be accountable for any issues that arise due to potential discrepancies between your university-registered name and your family name on these documents.

III. How We Respond

※ While registration of your preferred name is permitted, due to current legal restrictions, documents related to your employment at the university must be completed by you using your family name, and documents issued by the university (e.g., tax withheld at source slips) will also use your family name. Therefore, when you have an employment contract with the university (as a TA, etc.) or when tax procedures are required for your travel expenses for trips overseas, etc., students must use your family name on the necessary documents.

2. Handling of students' gender information

It is handled with care and its usage is minimized as much as possible.

The university handles gender-related information carefully to ensure that it is kept confidential. The handling of gender information in the class rosters and the Student Affairs Information System is described below. It is a priority to continue to make sure that gender information is handled with great care and attention.

① Sex/gender column on the class roster

Tohoku University is making requests within the university to eliminate the sex/gender field on the roster as much as possible. In cases when sex/gender information is necessary, it is to be kept confidential in order to avoid any harm to students.

② Indication of sex/gender on university-issued certificates and documents

All certificates issued by the university (transcripts, degrees, etc.) do not include sex/gender information. However, this information may be required when submitting medical certificates (*students can discuss whether to include information regarding their physical sex or not) to external parties or when completing the designated forms of other organizations.

③ Sex/Gender information on university forms and documents

In cases when sex/gender information is requested or essential, other options besides male/female, such as “other” and “no response” should be included. Tohoku University requests that this information in the university’s various forms and documents be removed as much as possible.

III. How We Respond

3. Academic classes

Contacts for general education subjects:

Educational Affairs Division, General Education Operations Section

Contacts for specialized education subjects:

Educational Affairs Section of each department/graduate school

- (1) Concerns related to enrollment in physical education courses, such as a ‘Sports A’ or a ‘Sports B’ class as a general requirement [Contact office above](#)

You can contact your class instructor or the General Education Operations Section of the Educational Affairs Division about concerns or questions related to course enrollment, locker rooms, equipment, etc.

Depending on the nature of the class or sport, there may be situations in which students come into physical contact with other people. Each instructor will do their best to reduce the possibility of physical contact. If you have any concerns, you should feel free to ask for guidance.

- (2) Concerns related to enrollment in specialized courses [Contact office above](#)

You can contact the relevant Academic Affairs Section of their undergraduate or graduate school to ask questions about specialized education courses (including practical training, etc.).

For example, instead of using the men’s or women’s changing rooms, you can request to change your clothes in a private space. In addition, when practical training is conducted overnight, you can request a private room, etc.

- (3) Concerns related to in-class activities [Consult office above](#)

Efforts are being made to end the unnecessary grouping of students by gender in classes. Tohoku University also recommends referring to students with the neutral honorific “-san” instead of gender-specific honorifics such as “-chan” and “-kun”, or asking individuals what they would like to be called.

4. Student life

- (1) Concerns related to health examinations [Contact office below](#)

Contact: Student Health Care Center

You may request to have your regular health checkup and other health checkups provided by the university on a different date due to their gender identity. These requests are responded to on a case-by-case basis. Please use the e-mail address provided in the health checkup notification sent by the university.

III. How We Respond

(2) Concerns related to restrooms on campus **Efforts are in progress.**

The multipurpose restrooms on campus are open to everyone. These restrooms can also be used as changing rooms. In the future, the name “multipurpose restroom” may be changed to “universal restroom” and established as “all-gender restrooms” that can be used by all individuals.

(3) Concerns about university dormitories **Contact office below**

Contact: Student Services Division

The university has six dormitories for Japanese students (five dormitories for men and one dormitory for women), seven University Houses for both international and Japanese students, and the International House for international students only. Although the rooms are essentially private rooms, each facility organizes and operates differently in terms of how the spaces and floors are shared amongst students. If you would like to discuss special accommodations, you should contact the relevant office when applying for a room.

(4) Concerns about dress and appearance in class and at formal ceremonies **We respect diversity.**

To support and promote the diversity of the university community, you are encouraged to dress according to your diverse identities in your daily classes and at formal events such as entrance and graduation ceremonies. The university respects the dress, such as kimono, ethnic costumes, etc., and appearance of you is in accordance with your diverse gender and cultural identities, while expecting that your chosen attire is also respectful of the nature of the event.

(5) Concerns about extracurricular activities **Contact office below**

Contact: Student Services Division, Student Activity Support Section

If you would like to discuss matters such as the use of changing rooms, etc., you may contact the Student Activity Support Section of the Student Services Division.

5. Study abroad

(1) Concerns about leaving Japan to study abroad **Contact office below**

Contact: Student Exchange Division

To respect your diversity and privacy, inquiries regarding your sex/gender are not made in counseling sessions.

For questions or fields regarding sex/gender information in application forms and other questionnaires and surveys, options for “other” and “no response” are being added. The Global Learning Center also provides consultation services for you to help address any questions or concerns that may arise while studying abroad.

III. How We Respond

(2) Concerns about studying in Japan from other countries [Contact office below](#)

Contact: International Student Help Desk

- International students who wish to enroll in a regular degree program
Consultation is available for applicants who need accommodations related to exams and their studies. Please contact the relevant section of the department/graduate school before applying for the program.
- *Please note that students who request accommodations will not be disadvantaged in any way in the admission decision process due to making such a request.
- International students who wish to enroll in a non-degree program (research students or exchange students who wish to study at Tohoku University)
Please consult with the designated host or program faculty before applying for the program.

6. Job search and career support

Contact: Center for Career Support

If you have any concerns about their search for an internship or a job, you should contact the Center for Career Support, which has prepared a list of LGBTQ+/SOGI-friendly companies and other resources. The Center for Career Support works together with the Center for Counseling and Disability Services' Counseling Office as needed.

III. How We Respond



III-2. For Faculty and Staff

1. Can we change our registered name and gender? In progress.

Contact: Human Resources Section of relevant department

Faculty and staff need to use their family name as it appears on their family register, however the use of a former name (e.g. maiden name) is permitted. Under current laws, the use of another preferred name is not permitted because any activities or correspondences with local governments, etc. must be done under an individual’s current family name. Permitting the use of another preferred name (other than an individual’s former name) will be considered following updates to governmental policy (e.g. policy changes related to the “same-sex partnership system”). If an individual changes their name or sex in the family register, they must also update the information registered with the university. To do so, they should submit a Name Change Notification form (or the Use of Maiden Name/Termination Notification form) and a copy of their family register to the Human Resources Section of their department.

2. Handling of gender information It is handled with care.

The university handles gender-related information of faculty and staff carefully to ensure that it is not made public without the individual’s permission.

3. Benefits and personnel programs Contact office below

Contact: Human Resources Section of relevant department

The programs that are available for pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare leave, etc., may differ depending on gender. Individuals with any questions regarding the use of these programs should contact the Human Resources Section of their department.

The university does not discriminate based on personnel matters related to sexual minority status.

IV. Counseling Services

Regarding issues related to gender and sexual diversity, consultation services are available through the contact points listed below. Please be assured that information shared during consultations is kept confidential. If the need to collaborate with other office(s) on campus arises in the efforts to provide support to you, information will only be shared after receiving your consent.

1. Consultation on University procedures

Please contact the office that can handle your concern directly. If the contact person is unknown, or if you feel uncomfortable reaching out to the designated contact person, proceed to “2. Consultation services”.

2. Consultation services

Tohoku University offers counseling services on a wide variety of topics which include gender and sexuality. Everything shared in counseling sessions will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with outside parties without your permission. Please feel free to use our services.

For Students / Counseling Office, Center for Counseling and Disability Services

- Specialized counselors (clinical psychologists) are available for consultation.
- Consultation for others involved in the student's life (e.g. faculty, staff, family members, etc.) is also available.

022-795-7833 (Japanese only)

gakuso@ihe.tohoku.ac.jp (English support provided, see website for details)

<http://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/>

For Faculty & Staff / Staff Counseling Office

- A full-time counselor is available for consultation.

022-217-4967

soudan@grp.tohoku.ac.jp

<http://www.bureau.tohoku.ac.jp/jinji/open/sodan/>

(available only in Japanese)

IV. Counseling Services

External consultation service (for students and faculty/staff)

- For students, faculty and staff, external consultation services for harassment, physical health, and mental health issues are available.

<http://www.bureau.tohoku.ac.jp/jinji/open/sodan/external/index.htm>

(available only in Japanese)

Other off-campus contacts

- There are many consultation services available for SOGI matters.

● Yoriso Hotline

Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima: 0120-279-226

Nationwide: 0120-279-338

● Miyagi Gender Equality Consultation Office

022-211-2570

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesdays from noon to 4PM (except for national holidays, New Year holidays, etc.)

- No appointment required; consultation free of charge

* We will continue working together to establish a one-stop counseling system that allows everyone to reach out and stop by without hesitation.

* If you do not know where to go for support or if you have any questions, please contact the Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Tohoku University.

● Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Tohoku University

022-217-6092

<https://dei.tohoku.ac.jp/en/>

V. For your reference



1. I want to know more about gender and sexual diversity.

► What is gender and sexual “gradation”?

Gender and sexual gradation is a term that can describe the wide variety and fluidity within the elements of sexuality. Instead of thinking of gender and sex as binary constructs with only two categories of “male” or “female”, we can think of them as diverse spectrums. How can you say that you are really “a man” or “a woman”? What is the definitive criterion for being 100% “male” or 100% “female”?

There are many terms used to describe gender & sexual identities and orientations. Below are some commonly used terms.

► Factors and terms related to gender and sexual gradation.

*Other factors and terms exist. We introduce only some of the major concepts here.

■ Physical sex (anatomy, body parts) = Sex assigned at birth

■ Gender identity = A person’s own sense of their own gender

- Cisgender (‘Cis’): A person whose gender identity corresponds with their physical sex
- Transgender (‘Trans’): A person whose gender identity does not correspond with their physical sex assigned at birth
- X-Gender: A person whose gender identity is neither male nor female; also referred to as ‘nonbinary’ and ‘genderqueer’
- Questioning: A person who is unsure and/or curious about their SOGI, and/or has not defined it

■ Sexual Orientation = pattern of romantic/physical attraction

- Heterosexual: pattern of being attracted to individuals of the opposite sex
- Homosexual: pattern of being attracted to individuals of the same sex
- Lesbian: A person who identifies as female and is attracted to women
- Gay: A person who identifies as male and is attracted to men
- Bisexual: A person who is attracted to both men and women
- Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction
- Pansexual: A person who is attracted to people regardless of physical sex or gender identity

■ **Gender Expression** = the way one expresses or presents their gender identity, often through their appearance/clothing, speech/language and, behavior/actions, etc. Tohoku University supports individuals’ free expression of gender.

V. For your reference

► What is an ‘ally’?

‘Ally’ means ‘supporter’ and refers to someone who understands and tries to support and advocate for those in minoritized groups. Sexual diversity is important for everyone. It is not just an issue for individuals in sexual minorities. Anyone can become an ally if they understand what an “ally” is and are willing to learn and help one another. At Tohoku University, student groups such as “AROW” (an official university group) have been formed to create spaces for people who identify as members of a sexual minority and people who are allies interested in learning from each other and discussing topics and issues of diverse sexuality.

2. Location of multipurpose restrooms

The current locations of multipurpose restrooms are labeled on the Tohoku University Barrier-Free Maps linked below.

① Katahira Campus

https://www.tohoku.ac.jp/japanese/img_all/accessmap_katahira.pdf

② Kawauchi-Kita Campus

<https://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/eef51588f00c64dee91faec81c73991d.pdf>

③ Kawauchi-Minami Campus

<https://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/55c2bc456166623551859daec9d2f319.pdf>

④ Aobayama Campus

(Aobayama Campus: North)

https://www.tohoku.ac.jp/japanese/img_all/accessibility_aobayama_north.pdf

(Aobayama Campus: East)

https://www.tohoku.ac.jp/japanese/img_all/accessibility_aobayama_east_e.pdf

(Aobayama Campus: West)

https://www.tohoku.ac.jp/japanese/img_all/accessibility_aobayama_east_w.pdf

(Aobayama Campus’ New Extension)

https://www.tohoku.ac.jp/japanese/img_all/accessibility_aobayama_new.pdf

⑤ Seiryō Campus

<https://www.ccds.ihe.tohoku.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ec45b142c575041bc7edbbe03c9a997c.pdf>

Published March 2023

Working Group for Developing Guidelines on Diverse Sexuality

V. For your reference

If you have any questions about the content of these guidelines,
the principles behind them, or any comments,
please contact the Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Tohoku University.

022-217-6092

<https://dei.tohoku.ac.jp/en/>

Due to the change in our name, editing has been done in January, 2024.