

Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Brunot, Ibrahim, and Kpeglo-Hennessy

RESPONSE FROM: Senator Dyens, Deputy-Provost (Student Life and Learning)

SUBJECT: Question Regarding the Application of the Preferred Name and Non-Binary Gender Disclosure Policies

MEETING DATE: May 11, 2016

PREAMBLE: WHEREAS trans* students whose birth first name do not reflect their gender may use a Preferred First Name according to McGill's Preferred Name Policy;

WHEREAS major issues with the application of the preferred first name policy application in McGill's system have been reported;

WHEREAS, when applying for jobs on MyFuture, the birth name (which trans* people may also refer to as "deadname" since it is not to be used anymore) appears first in all electronic communications, including in the object of notification emails employers receive about that application ; for instance the employer receiving an application for a Policy Intern position from a student whose actual name in use would be Matt White, but who was born as Amanda White, would receive an email entitled "Resume Submitted: For job Policy Intern From Matt (Amanda) White";

WHEREAS the birth name may be displayed first on MyCourses, on the McGill Outlook Address Book and on McGill Yammer (McGill's Social Network);

WHEREAS there is no comprehensive documentation of how this may hinder a full implementation of the preferred first name policy elsewhere;

WHEREAS it is also difficult to obtain an official transcript with the preferred name on it;

WHEREAS these issues are critical for trans* students applying for jobs through MyFuture or that require transcripts as part of the application package, including for placements that fulfill academic or professional requirements such as those required by the Faculties of Law, Medicine, Engineering, Social Work, and Medicine;

WHEREAS the average age of transition for trans* individuals falls well into usual university study years;

WHEREAS trans* people and students are particularly vulnerable to discrimination when their gender at birth is disclosed;

QUESTION:

1. Given this example of practical limitations to the application of the preferred name policy, when does the university expect to be able to resolve these problems?
2. Will the preferred first name policy be made available to faculty and staff? If so, when do they expect this to be implemented?
3. How has the University incorporated and reacted to data collected from the as yet-to-be released Student Diversity Survey, and when do they expect to circulate that report fully?

RESPONSE:

Question 1:

Students' use of a preferred first name is supported by McGill University, regardless of the reason for choosing a preferred first name. Currently, 6306 students have recorded a preferred first name in Minerva.

In 2006, the McGill Equity Subcommittee on Queer People and the University Registrar worked together to begin the implementation of the use of a preferred name, starting with its inclusion, along with the legal first name, on the class list.

In 2013, a much broader implementation was undertaken, resulting in the preferred first name (and not the legal first name) appearing in the following places:

- McGill I.D. cards; Minerva Class lists; Student Unofficial/Advising Transcripts; and the McGill email alias.

The preferred first name has been included in MyFuture since 2013, along with the legal first name. In 2015, it became possible to include a preferred first name in MyCourses on a case-by-case basis, although the mechanism for doing so is not optimal as the change is overridden each time a student's Minerva profile is edited.

Details about these changes are included here:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/students/records/address/preferred>

A further implementation phase is planned to ensure that the Preferred First Name will appear systematically and reliably in more systems (MyCourses, Yammer, MyFuture).

One of the prerequisites for a fuller implementation of the Preferred First Name is to centralize identification information about a person within McGill's systems. The Identity and Access Management project is underway and will address this need. This project spans 3 years and is currently in the planning phase.

Not all issues identified in the Senate Question may be resolved with technology. There are external organizations and legal obligations that limit the overall implementation. The legal first name cannot be replaced with a preferred name on some McGill official documents because of these limitations (e.g. external government audits and immigration). The affected documents include examples such as:

- Official university transcripts; reports to government; letters of attestation; diplomas and certificates; and tuition fee e-bills.

It is possible to change one's legal name on the above documents by submitting official legal change of name documentation to Enrolment Services. In such cases, the former legal name will be replaced by the new legal name in the student information system and reflected on all official documentation.

Question 2:

Employees may have their preferred name reflected in MyCourses, but this is affected by the same technical limitation that students currently experience and that will be addressed in the next phase of implementation.

Further, employees may use the same process as students to adjust the first name that appears as part of their McGill email address alias.

The process is described here:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/students/records/address/preferred>

Regarding the McGill ID card, IT Services is currently investigating the inclusion of employees' preferred names and expects to provide an estimated timeline for doing this by the end of May 2016.

Question 3:

The survey is being presented at this Senate Meeting (May 11, 2016) and will include a series of follow up actions.
