
Transformation Office
Embracing a New Normal: Skills for Staff

List of Definitions and Terminology:

Disclaimer: The following concepts, terminology, list, and definitions are compiled in means to make a point of departure and are limited. It is advised that the reader or viewer note that this document or list, concepts, terminology and definitions are all subject to change and may be further defined by student movements. The Transformation Office accepts no responsibility or liability in part or whole for the misrepresentations, omissions or shortcomings contained in this document.

- Ableism:** Discrimination against people with physical, psychiatric, sensory, and developmental disabilities which includes the expression of hate for disabled people, denial of accessibility, rejection of disabled applicants for housing and jobs, institutionalised discrimination in the form of benefit systems designed to keep disabled people in poverty, and the stigmatization, othering and stereotyping of disabled people. It further includes the view that disabled people are abnormal rather than members who belong to a distinct community. Thus enabling little to no effort to make society accessible both structurally and socially.
- Allyship:** An outgroup member of marginalised group who supports, and respects the rights of a marginalized community. An ally actively seeks to dismantle the system that affords them privilege and disenfranchises others. While the word does not necessitate action, people are active allies when they take action in supporting the rights and representational needs of the marginalized community and showing respect for their personhood. Being an active supporter can be stigmatized and is not assumed, many allies go through a “coming out process” in relation to being an ally
- Amatonormativity:** The assumption that a central, exclusive and amorous relationship based on systems of privilege is normal and natural for human beings and that it is a universally shared goal and further ascribes the pervasiveness of romanticism, conjugality and cisheteronormativity as curative measures and natural processes. It further divides neurodivergent, aromantic identities, and asexual identities and supports abusive cultures wherein consent is lacked and sex-blaming or slut shaming and gaslighting tactics are normalized.
- Bisexual:** The emotional, physical, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to men, womxn and/or to both (or all) genders. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.
- Cisgender:** The gender identity of a person who continues to identify with the gender they were assigned at birth or is not trans*. Because they are the "default" position in society such people have cis privilege. “Cis” is a latin prefix that means “on the same side [as]” or “on this side [of].”
- Cisheteropatriarchy:** A system of power based on the supremacy and dominance of cisgender heterosexual men through the exploitation and oppression of womxn and the LGBTQIA+ community. This includes oppressive discrimination such as queerphobia (homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, binarism, etc.).
- Cisnormativity:** The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of trans* or non-binary identities
- Cissexism:** A form of sexism that includes the belief that transgender or non-binary people are inherently inferior to cisgender people. It is frequently observed in both conservative anti-LGBT circles. Cissexism may or may not be conscious or deliberate on part of the person expressing or feeling it. Examples of cissexist behaviors include dismissing transgenderism and binarism as a phase, mental illness, or cry for attention, or considering transgender people to be "freaks," delusional, or sexual deviants.
- Colonialism:** The extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler colonies or administrative dependencies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled or displaced. Colonizing nations

generally dominate the resources, labour, and markets of the colonial territory, and also imposed socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures on the conquered population. The term colonialism may also be used to refer to a set of beliefs used to legitimize or promote this system. Colonialism was often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized; some observers link such beliefs to racism and pseudo-scientific theories dating to the 17th and 18th centuries.

- Coloniality:** Refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day (Maldonad-Torres 2007: 243)
- Coming Out:** A process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one's own sexuality or gender identity (to "come out" to oneself) The process by which one shares one's sexuality or gender identity with others (to "come out" to friends, etc.). This is a continual, life-long process- everyday, all the time, one has to evaluate and re-evaluate who they are comfortable coming out to, if it is safe, and what the consequences might be. It can be used as a means to empower oneself or other queer individuals.
- Cultural Appropriation:** Cultural appropriation is the adoption or use of elements of one culture by members of another culture. Power dynamics and practices commonly (though this is not always the case) involve taking or borrowing elements from a marginalized culture, religion or people who have been or are systematically oppressed by a dominant group. These traditions or symbols are usually taken as accessories and hardly provide traditional and historical context to them, thus trivialising religious or cultural symbolism and practices.
- Cultural Relativism:** The view that all cultural, moral and/or ethical systems are equally valid and none is better than the other. This includes that there is no ultimate sense or judgement of "good" or "evil" as this judgement should be viewed from a person's own culture.
- Decolonisation:** The meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism and colonial institutions that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of minds, bodies, and lands of people of colour. Decolonization is engaged for the ultimate purpose of dismantling colonial structures and symbols, realizing indigenous liberation, and dismantling white supremacy.
- Essentialism:** The attribution of certain characteristics to everyone features, stereotyping cultural practices, or biological sex characteristics. There is a move to presume a homogenised and unified group. This collective category is policed and the supposed defined characteristics are defining ones that cannot be questioned or modified. It can be understood as the reduction or denial of the ways in which people negotiate the complexities of their identities.
- Ethnocentrism:** Discriminatory attitudes, innuendos, and behaviours as well as assumptions or notions which include viewing one's own ethnic, culture and race as superior; one's standards of value as universal; and out-groups [external groups] as inferior and thus involves a process of 'othering'.

Feminism:	A movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression emphasizing the importance of learning about patriarchy as a system of domination, its institutionalization and how it is perpetuated and maintained. Understanding the way male dominance and sexism is expressed in everyday life by creating awareness of the ways womxn are victimized, exploited and oppressed.
Gaslighting:	A form of mental abuse and policing tactics designed to trivialize an individual's credibility and increase dependence and validation on the abuser. It is also used as a tactic to question a survivor's motives and the perpetuation of rape culture.
Gay:	A term to describe either people (usually men) whose physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same gender.
Gender Expression:	The external display of one's gender, through a combination of signifiers like dress, demeanour, social behaviour, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity.
Gender Identity:	One's internal, personal sense of being a womxn or man, boy or girl, androgynous, or non-binary. Gender is a massive non-linear spectrum. Generally confused with biological sex or sex assigned at birth
Gender Non-conforming:	Displaying gender traits that are not normatively associated with their biological sex _“feminine” behaviour or appearance in a male is gender-variant as is “masculine” behaviour or appearance in a female.
Gender:	Socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and womxn
Genderqueer:	An umbrella term for gender identities other than man and womxn, thus outside of the gender binary and cisnormativity. For e.g. both man and womxn (bigender, pangender); neither man nor womxn (genderless, agender); moving between genders (genderfluid); third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender.
Heterosexism:	The assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than homosexuality or bisexuality. It further includes the stigmatization, denial and/or denigration of anything queer and thus used as a justification for mistreatment, discrimination and harassment of queer individuals.
Humxn:	A term used for various and intersectional identities to dismantle the cisheteropatriarchal and cisheterosexist status quo that is violent to womxn and the LGBTQIA+ persons.
Institutional Culture:	The prevailing ethos ; the deep- rooted sets of norms, assumptions and values that predominate and pervade most of the environments in institutions on a daily basis (M, Steyn, 2000)
Intersectionality:	The view that individuals experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersections of systems

in society. Examples of this include race, sexuality, gender, class, disability, size, and ethnicity (K Crenshaw, 1989). *Seminal article: Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity politics and violence against womxn of colour by Kimberle Crenshaw.*

- Intersex:** Someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now considered outdated and derogatory. Often seen by mainstream society as a problematic condition or mutation when babies or young children are identified as intersex, it was for a long time considered an “emergency” and something that doctors moved to “fix” right away in a newborn child. There has been increasing advocacy and awareness brought to this issue and many individuals advocate that intersex individuals should be allowed to remain intersex past infancy and to not treat the condition as an issue or medical emergency.
- Islamophobia:** A word introduced in 1991 to describe hostility towards Muslims and irrational fear, prejudice, contempt, stereotyping or dislike for all or most Muslims. It entails the following views and attitudes that:
- Islam is monolithic and is incompatible to modern western liberal democracy
 - Islam does not share common values with other major faiths
 - Islam as a religion is inferior to the West.
 - It is archaic, barbaric, and irrational.
 - Islam is a religion of violence and inherently supports terrorism.
 - Islam is a violent political ideology.
- Kyriarchy:** Intersecting systems of domination and submission, in which a single individual might be oppressed in some relationships and privileged in others. It is an extension of the idea of patriarchy beyond gender.
- Mansplaining:** To condescendingly explain something or re-explain and rephrase something (especially to a womxn or womxn) from the viewpoint of male privilege. The splainer usually but not always holds male privilege.
- Micro-aggressions:** Any brief, everyday exchanges that seek to reaffirm inferiority of marginalized individuals repeating or affirming stereotypes about the minority group or systematically demeaning it. Messages that seek to position the dominant culture as normal and the marginalized one as aberrant, that express disapproval with the marginalized group and that assume all oppressed group members are similar (Concept Policy on unfair discrimination and harassment, CSCD, April 2016).
- Misogynoir:** The intersection of racism, misogyny and sexism directed towards black womxn. This can be in the form of the rejection of black womxn’s natural hair, hypervisibility of black womxn, derogatory and hateful social media nuances and hashtags against black womxn. How black womxn are appropriated in pop culture and media but are viewed as unattractive and unprofessional when not appropriated by non-black counterparts. It can be perpetuated by anyone however it also describes the violence, mistreatment, and erasures experienced by black womxn at the hands of black men.
- Modern Racism:** Moves away from racism as merely Colonial or Apartheid laws that separate and subjugate people of colour but refers to institutional structural power dynamics. Racism within the modern context is viewing another racial group as inferior and having the institutional, social power to subjugate another. According to the

philosopher Frantz Fanon black people thus cannot be racist because they lack the institutional hegemony to do so.

- Neurotypical:** A term used to describe allistic (non-autistic) and people with no mental illnesses or neurological conditions. Neurotypical individuals typically assume that their experience of the world is either the only one or the correct one. It is preoccupied with social concerns, delusions of normality and obsessions of conformity.
- Non-binary:** An umbrella term for gender identities that are more than just male or female or both or any gender that does not fit in the binary categories of man or womxn.
- Othering:** The process of making distinctions between groups on the basis of race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, and country of birth, ancestry, culture or other socially constructed differences (A reflection on the process of establishing an anti-discrimination policy: University of the Witwatersrand, October 2015)
- Passing:** A term for trans* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their self-identified gender/sex identity (regardless of birth sex). A queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight or cisgender. While for many trans* people this is considered to be a positive experience and allows them to reveal their trans* identity only at their own discretion, for many queer individuals passing is not a positive experience as it may feel invalidating, necessitate coming out over and over again to strangers, or make them feel invisible within their own community
- Patriarchy:** A system in which men are the primary authority figures central to social organization and the central roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. It is where fathers hold authority over womxn and children. It includes contempt and marginalization of womxnhood, femininity, non-masculinity, non-conformity, and gender variance. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and entails female subordination. Many patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, i.e. property and titles are inherited by the male lineage. Patriarchy can manifest itself socially, politically, culturally, religiously and economically and can be misunderstood as misandry.
- Polyamory:** Refers to having honest, typically non-possessive relationships with multiple partners and can include open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships, (which denote distinguishing between a ‘primary’ relationship or relationships and various “secondary” relationships) or non-hierarchical relationships of varying types.
- Privilege:** Refers to unearned benefits or granted social, cultural, religious, institutional, systemic, financial, and other advantages (or lack of disadvantages) that a group or individual holds as a measure of institutional power and part of their identity.
- Queer:** A term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and, transgender, people. It is commonly understood as either non-heterosexual or non-cisgender. Depending on the user, the term has either a derogatory or an affirming connotation, as many have sought to reclaim the term that was once widely used in a negative way.
- Queerphobia:** An umbrella term used to describe the mistreatment, antagonism, hostility, victimisation, marginalisation, and/or othering of queer individuals and identities. It encompasses the following discriminations: not limited to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, cissexism, heterosexism, transmisogyny, transmisogynoir, binarism, and non-binary erasures.

- Racism:** Discriminatory attitudes, unexamined assumptions, beliefs, stereotypes, and behaviours, societal and organisational practices, and laws that result in exclusions, restrictions, preferences, psychological distress, negative stereotypes, and distinctions for individuals or groups that are ‘othered’ (A reflection on the process of establishing an anti-discrimination policy: University of the Witwatersrand, October 2015)
- Rape Culture:** Rape culture refers to the way in which we collectively think about rape. It manifests in society and institutional cultures and refers to attitudes, beliefs, laws, behaviour and practices that normalize gender discrimination and sexual violence, including rape. Behaviour commonly associated with rape culture include gender discrimination, sexism, victim blaming, sexual objectification, trivializing rape, denial of widespread rape, refusing to acknowledge the harm caused by sexual violence, or some combination of these that leads to sexual violence becoming so normalized that rape is not viewed as a serious problem. Rape culture includes all forms of discursive, visual and audio expressions of gender violence, including sexist jokes, media messages via for instance television, music, advertising, social discourses and imagery that normalise violence against womxn and sexual coercion (Task Team on End Rape Culture, Stellenbosch University, April 2016).
- Sexism:** Discrimination based on gender and/or sex as well as the attitudes, stereotypes, systematic, institutional, social, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination typically against womxn. Given the historical and continued imbalance of power, it is also a system where men as a class are privileged over womxn as a class.
- Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment refers to behaviour typically experienced as offensive, by means of which sexual approaches are made within the context of a relationship of equal/unequal power or authority. Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination on the grounds of gender. It is unwanted and may be experienced as an expression of power, authority and control of a sexual nature. It creates a hostile environment that impedes the individual’s capacity to learn and/or work (Concept Policy on unfair discrimination and harassment, CSCD, April 2016).
- Slut Shaming:** The shaming of womxn for being sex positive. It includes the validation of men for being sexually active while restricting womxn to celibacy solely based on gender roles. If womxn do not comply they are shamed and often serves as justification for abuse and assault. It is often used as an excuse to blame the victim of rape or sexual assault, by referring to her sexual history of the type of clothing she wore.
- Structural Oppression:** The ways in which history, culture, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and personal behaviours and beliefs interact to maintain a hierarchy – based on race, age, religion, class, gender identity, sexuality, and/or other group identities – that allows the privileges associated with the dominant group and the disadvantages associated with the oppressed, targeted, or marginalized group to endure and adapt over time (Aspen Institute)
- Transitioning:** The psychological, social, legal, and/or medical process(not limited to sex reassignment surgery) of permanently reconciling one’s gender presentation or expression and/or assigned sex with their internal gender identity. Surgical aspect of transitioning is considered by many as requirement to be validated by the affirmed gender identity. An example includes a person who considers and views trans* people who have not undergone the surgical aspect of transitioning as not ‘real women/men’ yet. This is experienced as demeaning, devaluing and verbal violence by trans* persons and trivializes the importance of self-identification.

Unfair Discrimination :	Any conduct or omission, including a policy, rule, or practice that undermines a person’s human dignity or has the effect of preventing them from participating as an equal in any aspect of university life on one or more grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, HIV/Aids status, socio-economic status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth or any other legally recognised prohibited ground of discrimination. It is not unfair discrimination to take measures designed to protect or advance persons or groups disadvantaged by unfair discrimination (Concept Policy on unfair discrimination and harassment, CSCD, April 2016).
Victim Blaming:	Devaluing act that occurs when the victim(s) of a crime or an accident is held responsible — in whole or in part — for the crimes that have been committed against them. This blame can appear in the form of negative social responses from legal, medical, and mental health professionals , as well as from the media and immediate family members and other acquaintances
Victimisation:	Any detrimental consequence (or threat of such consequences) visited on a person because they have laid, intends to lay, or has helped someone else to lay, a complaint of unfair discrimination. Intimidation directed against them because they have provided information about a complaint (for example, whistle-blowing) or acted as a witness in a complaint of unfair discrimination (Concept Policy on unfair discrimination and harassment, CSCD, April 2016).
White Privilege:	Institutional and social (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to white people, especially those who resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in institutions, corporations, organisations, clubs and society. This includes having greater access to power, services, benefits, and resources than people of colour do.
Whitesplaining:	To condescendingly explain something (especially to a person or people of color) from the viewpoint of white privilege. The splainer usually - but not always - holds white privilege. Sometimes referred to as colorsplaining or melaninsplaining.
Womxn	A term used to state unequivocally that womxn are not a sub-division of men as patriarchal society dictates and as such are independent. Furthermore, it absolves essentialist rhetoric and constricting gender roles as it elicits self-determination. The word represents intersectional identities such as trans* or queer individuals.