Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/215)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 28 April 2021, reference K/21/215. Please accept our sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your request read:

“When a transgender student legally changes their name, will the University of Leeds recognise this name change by allowing a student to also change their user name?

If students are allowed to change IT user names please describe the process

If students are not permitted to change their user names, please explain how the student can avoid being "outed" when the user name initials do not match the initials of their new name”

The University of Leeds holds information relevant to your request.

The University’s current identity management system has been in place for many years. It was originally designed in the late 1990s, and was put into production in the year 2000. The system was not designed with changes of this nature in mind, and in any case is now 21 years old, and due for renewal. Providing a new identity management system was identified as a key element of a programme of “Digital Enablement” which has recently been funded. A review of the requirements for this system has commenced and the need to be able to make changes which reflect a users’ identity (beyond the username) will be included in the mandatory requirements for the new system.

The current system uses the username as a “key” to an individual’s identity. As a result, the username is linked to many different systems in a manner that is extremely difficult to change. In practice this means that changing a username can have unexpected repercussions, e.g. locking them out of some systems. Attempts have been made to make this change in the past and has led to difficulties in maintaining the integrity of the users’ data across multiple systems. It would theoretically be possible to create a new account, and manually migrate information from the old account to the new account. However, there is no way of guaranteeing that information would migrate, and so there is a significant risk of extreme disruption to the student.
As such, the inability to make changes to a username is purely due to practical limitations; it does not represent a university policy, nor does it reflect any ‘position’ on this matter.

In relation to your final query, we can advise that not all username initials match the initials of the name by which the individual is known. As such, it does not necessarily follow that a person whose username initials do match the initials by which they are known is transgender; the variance could be due to a range of other reasons.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle  
Deputy Secretary  
The University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Chloe Wilkins  
Freedom of Information Officer  

Secretariat  
University of Leeds