

7th March 2021

We hereby publish this update with regards to Elise (her preferred name), a Singaporean student studying engineering at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and a transwoman who has been working with us on a Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) experiment.

In the day following our previous letter, we have been made known of further developments which we find abhorrent. Not only were we made aware that bullying had continued from her classmates, but she was taken to task by school staff and administrators. Elise was informed that using the ladies, whether escorted or otherwise, “is not allowed” and “based on your NRIC” (identity card) her “gender is a male”; and that if she gets caught using the ladies again, this would amount to a criminal offense and that the administrators “will take serious action”.

We are appalled by the handling of the matter by the school staff and administrators. Schools, colleges and other academic institutions should be safe spaces for ALL students, including LGBTQ persons. This clearly isn't the case, when a student is not allowed to use washrooms corresponding to the gender they identify with, and is instead asked to use toilets meant for people with disabilities. Elise in this case feels segregated; singled out for something she didn't choose to have.

Elise is also not allowed to present herself in a manner comfortable to her. For instance, she is not allowed to keep long hair in workshops, even when there are proper safety controls to reduce risk of injury. She was told that all the staff in her course will continue to treat her “as a male student” and that while the staff would “respect her lifestyle”, she must continue to “respect the rules in ITE”, in reference to how she presents herself. It is understandable when Elise tells us that she isn't comfortable going back to school, as very little is being done to accommodate her situation.

We have looked at screenshots taken of bullying by her classmates, communications with her lecturers and have listened to an audio recording of when she was taken to task by school staff and administrators for using the ladies. We express our shock and dismay over the matters at hand; and with deep regret, we have released, with the permission of Elise, a media collection containing screenshots of the communications between Elise and her lecturers and peers, and a transcript of the audio recording for others to verify the veracity of the allegations and claims.

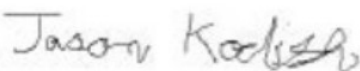
Identifying information has been redacted from this media collection, for the privacy and safety of the students and staff involved.

As academics, scientists and educators, we can do better to help accommodate people with different needs. We live in modern times, where science has improved our quality of life, including our understanding of the matters of gender identity and sexuality, and our policies towards students shouldn't be stuck in the past. We can do better than this. Elise and other students should not need to put up with archaic school policies for something not within their control. Fix schools and their policies, not students.

Jointly signed,



Joyce Ng
QKD Project Lead, Engineering, Singapore
Dip. Electrical and Electronics Engineering
Email: joyce_ng@thirring.org



Jason Kodish
Director, Physicist, Canada
BSc. Theoretical and Mathematical Physics
Email: jkodish@thirring.org