

Inclusive Language Guidance

Introduction

This document has been produced to try and provide some helpful guidance for those who are creating policy documents or other publications. The terms used in this document are by no means exhaustive and when writing about any topic research will still need to be undertaken as terminology in these areas is varied, fluid and constantly shifting as understanding, perceptions and use of language changes and develops. The terms described below therefore may vary in their usage and may become outdated.

This is not intended to be a prescriptive reference but designed to be of assistance to those who may be new to an area of work and to have a consistent terminology by which to reference particular areas.

It is also important to remember that when working with individuals or groups of individuals to be guided by them about the language that they may prefer to use and to self-define themselves.

If you are preparing forms which ask for disclosure of certain characteristics where possible the option of prefer not to say should be included.

'The hot topic of inclusive language'

Recently inclusive language seems to be a hot topic and one that many organisations are asking for workshops to be delivered in this area. Particularly for senior leadership teams. Why is this so important and why does language matter so much?

Creating a culture of inclusion etiquette

Inclusion etiquette refers to respectful communication and interaction with people who may not have the same characteristics as someone else. The principles of inclusion etiquette rely on common sense to guide your interactions with people and behave in the same courteous and respectful way with individuals you know in the workplace. It sets out professional workplace standards.

Etiquette may or may not feel like the right word to use here. There can be a sense of stiffness to it, associated with how to be part of the upper-class establishment. The flipside to this that etiquette and guidelines may need to be outlined for everyone to understand the terms of engagement in a place of work.

Defining inclusive language

Inclusive language is communication that avoids using words, expressions or assumptions that may exclude people. The exclusion may be inadvertent but has a negative impact on people. It is important to only refer to people's protected characteristics if it is relevant to the information we are communicating. Inclusive language includes emails, marketing material, social media, websites, and other forms of communication, such as imagery.

Some examples of inclusive language are:

- Introducing yourself with your pronouns e.g. I am x, the pronouns I use are she/her, him/he or they.
- Avoiding terms like "guys" for everyone and using gender neutral terms staff members, volunteers, visitors or members.
- Examples like man vs the moon, are adaptable to humankind vs the moon.
- Instead of assumptions about biological parents and assuming that there is a mum and dad to say carer, guardian, parent or caregiver.
- English idioms or phrases like "it's raining cats and dogs" may need to be explained to international staff members/visitors
- We may often say it is "awfully good". Does this mean it is good or bad? This is contradictory and confusing for international audiences and neurodivergent people, such as Asperger's and Autism. Use factual language rather than value-laden words and phrases.
- Try not to erase certain groups with your language, or to lump together all people within a certain group, e.g. The Muslims.
- Ask in advance if you are not sure of something.

Why inclusive language is important

For communication to be effective, it needs to speak to all audiences for which it is intended. Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people. It is sensitive to differences and promotes equitable opportunities. Language is fluid; therefore, meanings and connotations of words can change rapidly. In effect, it is more important to apply inclusive language principles rather than learning specific appropriate phrases, as these may change in meaning over time.

In 2018, a Deloitte Millennial Survey showed that there is a *"very strong correlation between perceptions of workforce diversity and loyalty"*.

- 69% of employees working at organisations they perceive as diverse intended to remain there for at least five years, thus reducing recruitment costs.
- Candidates will often turn down opportunities because of the impression formed by language that is used in interviews. Language used reflects whether workplace adjustments and support will be put in place.
- Candidates stated they can often tell whether an organisation has clear policies just through the tone and phrasing recruitment panels use.

How inclusive language creates belonging in the workplace

1. It enables deeper thinking about accessible spaces because staff and teams are not afraid to talk about disability. However, it is important to understand that a safe space is no longer safe, when oppressors have the power to dominate the space and make the space feel unsafe. So, reducing fear means that there is an increased likelihood that disability will not only be spoken about but thought about and integrated into new and existing projects.
2. Seeing everyone as they want to be seen. This is especially important in relation to gender identity. By creating an open environment where staff use pronouns in all communication everyone is likely to do this and there is less stigma.
3. Moving with the times. As mentioned previously, language changes and evolves faster than we may realise. Being aware and open to shifting language means that the whole organisation can evolve in an agile fashion.

4. Using inclusive language challenges both conscious and unconscious biases. Language is powerful, so adjusting words and phrases shifts mindsets too.
5. Inclusive language supports disclosure and declaration by creating a safe space making people feel valued.
6. Positive language facilitates a collective no blame culture as everyone makes mistakes and that it is ok!
7. It lets our customers, clients, service-users and members know that we practise what policies say. Bringing paper-based statements to life, resulting in increased trust with our stakeholders.

What are the University's expectations in respect of inclusive language?

- You should take ownership of your learning and how to utilise terminology and language with dignity and respect.
- If a complaint is made, you may be asked to improve your learning and how you implement it
- You will need to apologise to ensure that the University remains an inclusive and welcoming place for students and staff

What if I get it wrong?

Language is always evolving and developing. As human beings the opportunity to learn, practice and experience language through 'verbal'- immediate/in person exposure or the 'written word' is key to our ability to be natural and at ease. Repetition and practice builds understanding and confidence to use language appropriately. However, as human beings we are prone to make mistakes, it is important to recognise that what you have said could be extremely hurtful and you need to apologise for this. Also, you should not act upset when apologising as you put the burden of emotional support on the victim.

It is also key to respect people's privacy. Let people share information about themselves if and when they feel comfortable doing so. Individuals are not responsible for educating the public by revealing their intimate lived experiences.

Inclusive language goes beyond the carrot and stick legal approach. It is about human connection and common ground. We are all more than what we chose to declare and have been subject to biases ourselves. It is about listening, hearing and interacting to broaden our horizons and ensure we work together and talk about what will work best for everyone. (**diverseinds.co.uk-7 ways inclusive language creates belonging at work*)

Age

Inclusive language should be reflective and welcoming to our multigenerational colleagues. It is good practice to avoid terms that may be perceived as a manifestation of ageism. Ageism can be defined as the application of assumed age-based group characteristics to an individual, regardless of that individual's actual personal characteristics.

Try	Instead of	Use this
Avoid general terms as these imply that people of certain age groups or generations are a homogenous group, failing to recognise people's individuality.	The elderly, the old, pensioners The young	Mature individual, person/people Young person, young adults. Preferred: Child (4-12 years) Teenager (13-19 years) Young people/adults (16-24 years) Adult (19-64 years) Older people/adults Over 65's/75's etc.
Avoid using the terms 'girls', 'boys' when referring to colleagues or employees, as these refer to young children	The boys/girls in the office	The men/women in the office Our colleagues in the office

Avoid using language that stereotypes or implies that a particular age group is more or less able or has stereotypical characteristics by virtue of chronological age.	A young and vibrant team A mature workforce	An effective and vibrant team An experienced workforce
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Disability

The phrase disabled students/people should be used on all documentation. Organisations such as Scope, Disability Rights UK and the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), which is the professional body for disability staff in HE all use this term. Disabled people fits in with the social and affirmative models of disability

The portrayal of people with disabilities has traditionally used language that emphasises the disability rather than the person, resulting in the depersonalisation, stereotyping (often with people with a disability seen as victims or suffering) and the amalgamation of whole spectrums of specific physical and intellectual impairments. In the majority of circumstances, there will be no need to refer to a person’s ability or disability. If the need arises, it is best practice to use ‘person-centred’ rather than focusing on the disability.

Try	Instead of	Use this
Avoid blanket terms. Always put the person before the disability.	The disabled, the handicapped	Disabled person Disabled people
Avoid using terms that imply normalcy/being healthy when referring to people without disabilities.	Normal, healthy, able-bodied person	Non-disabled people
Use positive language rather than descriptions	Disabled toilets/lifts Toilets/lifts for the disabled	Accessible toilets/lifts

that emphasise limitations.		
Avoid negative terms that overextend the severity of a disability.	Wheelchair-bound, confined to a chair Cancer or dementia victims	Person who uses a wheelchair People living with cancer or dementia, /usually wheelchair user
Avoid outdated and derogatory terms.	Deaf and dumb Nuts, psycho, mad retarded, slow	D/deaf person People with a mental illness/condition Person with learning disability
Avoid terms which equate the person with the ability or disability.	Schizophrenic Autistic child	A person with a mental health concern, condition or illness A neurodivergent child or with a learning disability
Avoid using euphemisms	Challenged, special	Person with learning disability
Avoid being effusive about the achievements of people with disability when they are going about their daily life and work.	Courageous, inspiring, heroic	Successful, productive

Gender reassignment, gender, gender identity, **sex**

The following list provides a glossary of common terms associated with sex, gender and gender identity. The definitions are based on those provided by Advance HE (previously Equality Challenge Unit) guidance and Stonewall.

Try	Instead of	Use this
Use gender neutral terms.	Man, Mankind Workmanship Man the desk/phones Man-made	Humans, Humankind Quality of work/skills Attend the phones Artificial, manufactured, synthetic
Use gender neutral pronouns and expressions.	Anyone who wants his work evaluated Welcome ladies and gentlemen	Anyone who wants their work evaluated Welcome to friends and colleagues Welcome to everyone
Use person-centred language.	The transgender	Trans people
Respect the preferences of those people who want to be referred to by gender neutral pronouns.	She, her, hers and he, him, his	They, them, theirs
Use terms that include all relationships.	Boyfriend, wife, husband	Partner, spouse
Official forms should include a comprehensive list of titles, sorted alphabetically rather than following any perceived hierarchy.	Prof, Dr, Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Mx, etc	Dr, Miss, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Mx, Prof, etc
Avoid titles that imply the usual jobholder being of a particular gender.	Cleaning ladies Policeman	Cleaners Police officer
Be mindful of appropriate and respectful in-group	Queer (only use if you identify as queer)	Queer communities N/A

versus out-group naming, i.e. avoid using terms that are only used by individuals that self-identify as part of a specific community.	Agender (only use if you identify as agender)	
Avoid using patronising terms that may cause offence to a particular gender.	Girls, Ladies, Dear, Son, Love	The person's name, their professional title or friends and colleagues
Avoid irrelevant gender descriptions.	A female scientist A male nurse	A scientist A nurse
Recognise and respect the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.	Don't use 'LGBTQ+' if you are only talking about gender or gender identity. Don't use 'straight' as the opposite of 'LGBTQ+' (transgender people can be any sexual orientation, including straight).	Only use LGBTQ+ when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based communities. Use 'straight cisgendered' or 'ally

Marriage and civil partnership

Since 2005, in the UK same sex couples have been able to form a legally recognised relationship, known as a civil partnership. Couples who form a civil partnership have a new legal status – that of a 'civil partner', where the couple gains rights and responsibilities similar to that of a marriage. It is good practice to use language that reflects this new legal status.

Try	Instead of	Use this
Official forms should include this new legal relationship status.	What is your marital status? • single	What is your relationship status?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • married • divorced • widow/widower 	<p>What is your marital/civil partnership status?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single • married/civil partner • divorced/dissolved civil partnership • widow/widower/surviving civil partner
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Race, ethnicity and nationality

Race is frequently used to group humans based on shared physical and social qualities. Ethnicity is the fact/state of belonging to a social group with common national or cultural tradition. The UK is a racially and culturally diverse place and it is important not to assume that a person's appearance defines their nationality or cultural background. It is recommended to only use a person's race, ethnicity or nationality to identify or describe them if it is directly relevant to the point you are making.

Try	Instead of	Use this
Use adjectives rather than nouns when it is necessary to refer to someone's race.	Asians	Asian people
Avoid irrelevant ethnic descriptions.	The Asian doctor	The doctor
Don't use 'minority group' as it implies inferior social position and is often relative to geographic location.	Minority group	Ethnic Minority Group or Minority Ethnic Group

<p>Avoid outdated terms.</p> <p><i>(Avoid & challenge racial ethnic slurs and any language that infers stereotypes based on racial and ethnic associations).</i></p>	<p>Coloured</p>	<p>*Respect an individual's/groups preference.</p> <p>Although many Government departments use:</p> <p><i>*Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) OR</i></p> <p><i>*Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME).</i></p> <p>Many people do not recognise these acronyms, as they are problematic due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAME does not specify the ethnic groups included. • Some references include all minority ethnic groups including White Gypsy, Roma, Irish Traveller groups, while others include 'White Ethnic Minorities in the 'White Category' • BAME can often infer an assumption that all-non-White people exist as a homogenous group, without appreciating
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		<p>the uniqueness of individual ethnicities.</p> <p>Use ethnic minority instead as this also associates with disadvantaged and marginalised White ethnic minorities such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage groups.</p> <p>Use capital letters when referring to ethnic minority groups e.g. "in comparison Black staff felt..."</p>
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Religion or belief

'Religion or belief' is the preferred term in use in equality and human rights legislation, including in the Equality Act 2010.

Try	Instead of	Use this
<p>Avoid using Christian-centric terms, not only on ground of respect but also for practical reasons.</p> <p>The term 'last name' should not be used as it could be confusing to Asian groups who place their family name first.</p>	<p>Christian name</p> <p>Surname,</p>	<p>First name, given name</p> <p>Family name</p>

Surname is not unacceptable. However, this word may originate from sire-name, or the name derived from one's father.		
Official forms should include both options for religion and belief (in upper case).	<p>What is your religion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian • Muslim • Hindu • Jewish • Sikh • Other 	<p>Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No <p>If yes, which one?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian • Muslim • Hindu • Jewish • Sikh • Other <p>Alternatively: What is your religion or belief?</p>
Use legally correct terminology	<p>Faith</p> <p>Religious discrimination</p>	<p>Religion or belief</p> <p>Discrimination on grounds of religion or belief</p>
Define groups of individuals from the same religion		<p>Muslim Community</p> <p>Jewish people</p>

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another individual. This could be towards people of the same sex, opposite sex or both. Sexual orientations include asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, questioning and straight.

Try	Instead of	Use this
Avoid terms that suggest a degree of voluntary choice when this is not necessarily the case.	Sexual preference Lifestyle choice	Sexual orientation
Use person-centred language.	Lesbians, gays, bisexuals	Lesbian, gay, bisexual people
Use language that does not assume heterosexuality as the norm.	Invite your boyfriend/husband Family planning clinic	Invite your spouse/partner. Sexual health clinic or sexual health and wellbeing clinic
Recognise diverse family formation.	Mother and father	Parents, caregivers
Recognise and respect the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.	Don't use 'LGBTQ+' if you are only talking about sexual orientation. Don't use 'straight' as the opposite of 'LGBTQ+' (transgender people can be any sexual orientation, including straight).	Only use LGBTQ+ when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based communities. Use 'straight cisgendered' or 'ally'.

Guidance example template(s) for collecting demographic data:

Only use *race* or ethnicity if it is relevant to the information you are communicating.

Broad ethnicity: Asian, Black, White written in upper case

Specific ethnicity: Asian British, Black African, Chinese written in upper case

Ethnicity demographic categories:

What is your ethnic origin?

White British	White Irish	Other White background			
Black or Black British	Caribbean	African	Other Black background		
Asian or Asian British	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other Asian background
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	White and Black African	White and Asian	Other Mixed background	
Other	Arab	Gypsy/Traveller	Prefer not to say		

Gender Identities

The University of Greenwich is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all staff and students across the institution and championing gender diversity and equality. In order to best continue the ongoing development of support and services for people across the gender spectrum, we ask applicants to share with us the gender identity/gender identities that they feel represents them best if known at the time of asking.

How would you describe your gender identity/gender identities? ["free text box"]

- *Female
- *Female - Cisgender/Cis

- *Genderfluid
- *Genderqueer
- *Intersex
- *Male
- *Male - Cisgender/Cis
- *Non-binary
- *Trans
- *Queer
- * Prefer not to say

If you said prefer not to say, is there anything we can support you with?

Is your gender Identity as described above the same as it was assigned at birth ('if applicable')?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Additional Glossary

Ace	Ace is an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including lack of attraction. Ace people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms including but not limited to asexual, aromantic, demis and grey-AS.
Cisgender or Cis	Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.
Deadnaming	Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changes their name as part of their transition.
Gender dysphoria	Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who does not feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.
Gender expression	How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender may not, however identify as trans.
Gender identity	A person innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.
Gender reassignment	The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
Gender Recognition	This enables trans people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender Certificate (GRC) and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and you currently must be over 18 to apply.

You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

Identity The characteristics and qualities of a person, considered collectively and regarded as essential to that person's self-awareness.

Inter sex A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female.

Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

****Neurodiverse** Everybody- this term is often used instead of 'neurodivergent', yet it is potentially problematic (akin, perhaps, to referring to an African-Caribbean person as 'racially diverse'). A group can be neurodiverse, an individual is likely better described as neurodivergent.

****Neurodivergent** Dyslexic and autistic brains- having cognitive functioning different from what is seen as 'typical'-while the term appears to reflect the 'medical model' above, it is a term that most neurodivergent people are comfortable with. Neurodivergence is largely or entirely genetic or innate-such as dyslexia-other forms of neuro divergence can be acquired, such as via an incidence of brain trauma.

****Neurotypical** Everybody else- given the biological fact that there is no such thing as a 'typical' brain, neurotypical is best thought of as not 'neurodivergent'-that is, within parameters of neurocognitive style that have not been either medically defined as 'disorders' or culturally defined as 'neurodivergent'. It is important not to draw simple lines in the sand between 'neurotypicals' and neurodivergent people-human diversity is a highly complex spectrum, in which everyone sits.

Non-binary	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.
Pan	Refers to a person who's romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.
Pronoun	Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation- for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir.
Queer	Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80's by the queer community who have embraced it.

References:

**(Stonewall 2020)*

***CIPD Neurodiversity at Work Guide February 2018*

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/training/inclusive-language/>