

UNSW LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Language Guide

Language matters and using inclusive terminology helps people to feel included.

The way we communicate with each other creates a culture in which everyone can feel valued, respected, and included. Inclusive language is respectful, accurate, and relevant.

Language

UNSW uses the acronym LGBTQIA+ as the inclusive umbrella that recognises the most common categories within gender and sexuality diverse populations. It stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer-identifying people, people with natural variations in sex characteristics (formerly intersex), and asexual. The '+' is an inclusive and intentional way of representing all identities and experiences that are not represented by the letters.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that by which an individual wishes to be referred to in order to indicate their gender identity.

Gendered pronouns include:	Gender neutral pronouns include:	Some people may use neo-pronouns* such as:	Some people may use a combination of pronouns such as:
She/her/hers	They/them/theirs	Xe/xem/xyr	She/they
He/him/his		Ze/hir/hirs	He/she/they
		Ey/em/eir	

*Neo-pronouns are new pronouns. They are uncommon; however, you may meet someone who uses them.

Names

Using someone's name can have a positive psychological impact. It helps people feel seen, valued, and respected.

Some people change their names for various reasons; a name change as part of gender affirmation for example.

If a person changes their name, respectful and inclusive behaviour would be to ensure you are using that name as it was told to you.

For trans and gender diverse people especially, using the correct pronouns and name is an important and validating part of their gender affirmation, and a sign of respect.

If you happen to accidentally misgender someone or use the name a person was given at birth but no longer uses (deadname), politely apologise, correct yourself, and commit to ensuring you remember the correct language moving forward. Don't overthink it – accidents happen! However, we must make sure we don't repeat those mistakes as best we can.

Misgendering or deadnaming someone intentionally is hurtful and can be considered harassment and discriminatory behaviour.

Tips on pronoun and name usage:

1. Role model the use of pronouns by:
 - a. Adding your pronouns to your email signature
 - b. Adding them to your Teams profile
2. The easiest way to ask someone their pronouns, is to share your own. By introducing yourself with your pronouns, it signals to people that it is a safe space to share their own, if they feel comfortable doing so.
3. Be careful not to share information that may 'out' someone. If a staff member or student shares their gender identity with you, do not share it with others unless you have their expressed permission.
4. Own your mistakes by acknowledging when you have made the mistake and correcting it. It takes time to unlearn what we've been taught about gender, and it's normal to make mistakes along the way. Model the behaviour you want to see. For example, "Oh I know Em, she's a great friend. I'm sorry, I meant *they* are a great friend. They always check in when I'm stressing over work."
5. Addressing misuse of pronouns and names by:
 - a. Politely correcting someone if they misgender or deadname someone
 - b. Ensuring this is done even if the person is not present

Gendered Language

When referring to people, aim to speak in a way that does not mention gender where it is irrelevant. For example:

- ✓ If a student wants to change class, they should speak to an academic advisor.
- ✓ If you want to change classes, please speak to an advisor.
- ✗ If a student wanted to change classes, he or she must ask an academic advisor.

When it comes to job or other terms, aim to use gender neutral terms where possible. For example:

Instead of these terms...	Use these terms!
Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls	Team, everyone, folks
Maternity/paternity leave	Parental leave
Husband/wife	Partner
What are your preferred pronouns? *	My pronouns are...What are your pronouns?
Sexual preference*	Sexual orientation, sexuality

*It is best practice to not use the word 'prefer' as it implies that there is a choice to be made.

It is also best to avoid introducing people as 'Mr' or 'Mrs/Ms' unless expressly asked to do so. Refer to or introduce people by their names, rather than assuming a title. If a title must be included, it is best practice to ask ahead of time. At a university, people may use titles such as 'Dr' or 'Professor'. As these are gender neutral, you may not need to ask permission to use these. However, the same comfortability of titles should not be assumed of others.

Collecting data

If you need to specify gender for things such as documents or data, use men/women/non-binary or gender diverse, rather than male/female/other.

‘Sex’ refers to what someone is assigned at birth based on their sex organ characteristics. ‘Gender’ refers to the range of social, psychological, cultural, and behavioural aspects of being a [man](#) or woman, and how someone identifies with those aspects.

The use of the ‘sex’ term (male/female) rather than the gender term (man/woman) can be seen as exclusionary as it indicates an emphasis on biological sex, rather than how a person identifies their gender. This is especially problematic for those who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth. Please refer to the table below for some examples.

Instead of these terms...	Use these terms!
Female identifying	Women, women (cis and trans)
	Women, including cis, trans, and non-binary people who are perceived as women or have experiences of being a woman*
Male identifying	Men, men (cis and trans)
	Men, including cis, trans, and non-binary people who are perceived as men or have experiences of being a man*

*These would be used circumstances where such detail is necessary.

However, various areas of study, including health and medicine for example, may utilise data on ‘sex’ terms in an effective and inclusive way. The most appropriate method will differ according to the problem being solved, the context in which the question is being asked, and relevant intersectional factors (e.g., age, sexuality, race) at play.¹

Tips and Practices

5 tips for inclusive language from Diversity Council Australia (DCA):

1. Context: be conscious of your environment and avoid assumptions about your audience
2. Keep an open mind: be open to changing what you have always thought normal, respectful, or appropriate to say.
3. If in doubt, ask: if you are unsure of what terminology someone uses, just ask them. Not all people use the same terms, and there is no harm in asking respectfully.
4. Focus on the person: aim to only refer to an individual’s identities such as gender if it is explicitly or directly relevant.
5. Keep calm and respond: if someone ‘calls out’ your use of non-inclusive language, take responsibility and avoid becoming defensive. Acknowledge it in the moment, apologise, and reflect on how you can avoid it in future. We understand people can make unintentional mistakes, and taking the feedback on board is very important to help understand why offense may have been caused.

An easy way to model inclusive language, is by having your pronouns in your email signature. Please find an example of an email signature below:

Name (he/him)

¹ The Centre for Sex and Gender Equity in Health and Medicine

Role/Title

Diversity & Inclusion

Division of Societal Impact, Equity, and Engagement

Lower Ground, Chancellery

UNSW Sydney

NSW 2052 AUSTRALIA

E: name@unsw.edu.au W: www.unsw.edu.au

It is also possible now to display your pronouns on Microsoft Teams and Outlook.

- Restart Teams (by quitting and reopening the application) and Outlook.
- Open your profile card. In **Teams**, do this by selecting your profile picture in the upper right corner and then selecting your name/email address. In Outlook, open **Outlook on the web** and select your name or profile picture within Outlook Mail or Calendar.
- On your profile card, select “**+ Pronouns**” or the pronouns listed below your name.
- The “**Add your pronouns**” window will appear. To add or change your pronouns, select from the examples (only available in English), or enter your own. To delete, remove your pronouns.