



Employment Equity and Diversity Unit

NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE PRACTICE AND PRESENTATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

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Approved by:	University Council				
Custodian title & e-mail address:	Director, Employment, Equity and Diversity lynne_wright@uow.edu.au				
Author:					
Responsible Faculty/ Division & Unit:	Employment, Equity and Diversity Unit				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Nil				
References & Legislation:	Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977 (NSW) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) Racial Discrimination Act, 1977 (Commonwealth) Sex Discrimination Act, 1984 (Commonwealth) Age Discrimination Act, 2004 (Commonwealth) Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Commonwealth) Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy Respect for Diversity Policy Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) 2007-2010 Disability Action Plan University Code of Conduct (Staff)				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
Expiry Date of Policy:	Not applicable				



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1 Purpose of Policy

1. As part of its Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action initiatives, the University of Wollongong endorses a policy of non-discriminatory language practice and presentation in all academic and administrative activities of the University.
2. Accordingly, the University will:
 - a. promote the use of non-discriminatory language and presentation in all University of Wollongong documents and publications;
 - b. promote the use of non-discriminatory teaching practice in classrooms;
 - c. develop guidelines and regulations for students' use of non-discriminatory language in their written work and oral presentations;
 - d. establish a procedure for settling complaints and grievances about discriminatory language, presentation, and teaching practices; and
 - e. inform all staff of their responsibilities under the policy and of the existence of a complaints procedure; and distribute suitable educational material to assist staff in compliance.

2 Application & Scope - Exclusions or Special Conditions (if any)

1. This policy has been developed to assist University staff in avoiding uses of language which may appear to exclude some groups of people or which may gratuitously give offence. It is directed toward the elimination of stereotyping, perpetuation of false assumptions and discrimination in University processes.
2. This policy applies to:
 - a. all presentation and practice by staff in teaching and administrative activities
 - b. in face-to-face dealings amongst staff and between staff and students
 - c. to students' written work and oral presentations.

3 Complaints Procedure

1. Students or staff with complaints or concerns should approach the Head of their Department or Unit, or if preferred, one of the following:
 - a. the Director of Employment Equity and Diversity
 - b. the Dean of Students
 - c. Counselling Services.

4 Guidelines for Referring to Minority Groups

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

1. An Aborigine is a person of Aboriginal descent who identifies as an Aborigine and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.
2. The words 'aborigine' or 'aboriginal' refer to the people living in a country at its earliest period. In order to refer specifically to the indigenous inhabitants of Australia, the words should always be treated as proper nouns or adjectives, and begin with a capital letter.
3. Aboriginal is the adjective pertaining to Aborigine and should not be used as a noun. (Please note that this equity statement overrules the advice of many style manuals on this topic.)
4. Note that the term 'Aborigine' is a general one referring to the Australian Aboriginal race as a whole. When practicable, it is preferable to be more specific. Koori is the name by which Aborigines living in Southern NSW, Victoria, and Tasmania refer to themselves. Murri people come from the northern



part of NSW and most of Queensland, while Goori people live on the NSW central coast. Aboriginal people from these groups make up most of the Wollongong Aboriginal population, although there is a growing contingent of Aborigines from other parts of Australia as well as Torres Strait Islanders. Torres Strait Islands have in the past been considered Aborigines, but this is no longer the case. They are a distinctly different race of people and wish to be recognised as such.

Dreamtime, Myths and Legends

5. Aboriginal religious creation stories are often referred to as myths or legends. The words dream, myth and legend all carry connotations of invalidity. Aboriginal religious beliefs and stories are just as valid as those of any other spiritual or religious group, and so more careful and appropriate terminology is required.

Tribe

6. The word 'tribe' has negative connotations for many Kooris. More suitable terms are clan or family groups.
7. Note: Care should be taken with terms like 'traditional' and 'primitive' to describe present day Koori culture and society. Traditional implies a static quality which may not be reflected in reality in Koori society, and primitive is a value-laden and imprecise term.

People with Disabilities

8. Many people with disabilities understandably resent the impersonal terms used to describe them because these ignore their individuality and imply that a disability necessarily means general incapacity to perform many tasks and activities. We are all differently 'abled'. It is important that we avoid stereotyping and depersonalisation by not emphasising the disability, but rather focusing on the individual.
9. The term '**people with disabilities**' is therefore preferred to the disabled, the handicapped, or disabled people, because it is recognised that a disability is only one characteristic of an individual and does not indicate a general lack of ability or capacity.
10. Similarly, in relation to specific disabilities, it is preferable to use terms such as 'people with epilepsy', 'people who are deaf or hearing impaired', 'people who are blind or vision impaired', rather than collective nouns such as epileptics or the blind.
11. Confusion in the use of the term 'disability' and related terms can be clarified by referred to the following World Health Organisation definitions:
12. **Impairment** is any loss or abnormality of structure or function whether psychological, physiological or anatomical.
13. **Disability** is any loss or reduction of functional ability and activity that is consequent upon impairment.
14. **Disadvantage** is the obstacle resulting from an impairment or a disability. Disadvantage represents the social and environmental consequences to the individual stemming from the presence of impairment and disability.
15. These definitions can be more clearly illustrated by example: spinal cord damage of a person with paraplegia is an impairment; its effect on the person's ability to walk is a disability; if the person's access to tertiary education studies is affected by difficulties in access to buildings, to transport, or by discriminatory attitudes, then they suffer a disadvantage.
16. Whether a disability entails a disadvantage depends on an individual's social and physical environment, as well as the nature and extent of the disability.
17. The term **impairment** includes those which are not visible. Conditions such as anaemia, epilepsy, heart disease and chronic pain are often described as "*hidden disabilities*". Some people may have an impairment which is perceived by others as resulting in some degree of disadvantage, even if there is no functional disability. For example, physical deformities may constitute a disadvantage only because of social attitudes.



Ethnic Minority Groups

18. There is much controversy regarding the most appropriate terminology to use. The following definitions may assist the word selection for a particular context:
 - 18.1. Ethnic Group can be described in an objective sense as people who share a particular national origin, religion, language, or culture. Linking such objective factors with a subjective identification is probably more useful so that ethnicity involves a 'sense of peoplehood'.
 - 18.2. The term 'ethnic group' can be misleading, because everyone belongs to an ethnic group, not just those who are of non-Anglo-Celtic origins. Ethnic is the adjective pertaining to 'ethnicity' and should not be used as a noun.
 - 18.3. Immigrant means a person who takes up residence in a country other than his/her birthplace.
 - 18.4. The term 'migrant' actually refers to a person who moves from one place to another. This term is often used to mean 'immigrant' in the sense defined above. However, immigrant is the preferred and more accurate term where it is permanent settlement to which we are referring. Migrant is sometimes inappropriately used to refer to people of non-English speaking background generally, whether or not they were born overseas or in Australia.

People of Non-English Speaking Background

19. This term refers to people:
 - a. who have migrated to Australia and whose first language is one other than English;
 - b. born in Australia but one or both parents' first language was not English.
20. People of non-English speaking background (NESB) is the term most commonly used within an equal opportunity background. Another acceptable term is People with a Language Background other than English (LBOTE).
21. Ethnicity is another ideological and controversial concept denoting '**a sense of peoplehood**', a feeling of belonging and sharing in a common culture, way of life, nationality or religion. Ethnicity is maintained through a process of self-ascription and ascription by others.
22. Multiculturalism is a term commonly used to convey either of two meanings. One is a factual description of the Australian population, which comprises a wide range of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
23. The other meaning describes a social ideal. It refers to policies, institutional arrangements and community attitudes that appreciate the diversity of Australian society and how this diversity can enrich Australian life. It recognises that to achieve a just, equitable and harmonious society, there must be no economic or social disadvantages arising from ethnic, racial or cultural background, and that the right to maintain distinctive cultural identities should exist unimpaired by any form of discrimination.
24. Much language use in Australia tends to either stereotype ethnic and cultural minorities or make them invisible. For instance, our society now consists of many people holding religious beliefs other than Christian, or non at all, and it is inappropriate to request a person's 'Christian name' when we are seeking given name identification. Asking for someone's first name is also inappropriate for the naming practices of many Asian people. It is preferable to request surname or family name rather than last name, and given name rather than first name.

5 Guidelines for Gender Inclusive Language

What is it?

1. Gender inclusive language is often referred to as non-sexist language. It is language that treats women and men equally. It does not exclude one gender nor demean their status. It does not stereotype, nor suggest false generics, nor make irrelevant gender references.



False Generics

2. The term 'man' can be ambiguous because of its traditional dual meaning. One meaning refers to an adult male and the other to the human species. Research indicates that people tend to visualise males when they are asked to describe or define words such as foreman or chairman. In this way, language reinforces inequality, misrepresenting and excluding women. It is therefore no longer appropriate to use man as a generic term as it is confusing and discriminatory.
3. Usually it is not difficult to substitute appropriate expressions. It is nonetheless important to select a relevant and accurate alternative.

Avoid	Possible Alternative
ancient man	ancient people or civilisation
chairman	chairperson, chair, moderator, convenor
foreman	supervisor
man in the street	ordinary or average citizen
mankind	humanity, humankind
man-made	handcrafted, synthetic, handmade, artificial
manned	staffed
manpower	labour, staffing, workforce
newsmen	reporters, journalists, media
sportsmanship	sense of fair play

Unaffected Words

4. Some similar looking words are not compounds incorporating the gender-specific word 'man' and these do not have to be considered. Examples of these are:

- manage }
- manipulate } derived from manus (Latin for hand)
- manual }
- manufacturer }
- manuscript }
- human} derived from humanus (Latin for human)

Generalisations and Clichés

5. Historically, women's contributions have often been overlooked through use of words or phrases which neglect the reality that women's experiences are usually different from those of men. Clichés tend often to have the same effect and should be reworded.

Avoid	Possible Alternative
brotherhood of man	human family, global community
forefathers	ancestors, forebears



founding fathers	founders, pioneers
man-sized job	demanding task, big job

The Personal Pronoun

6. Inaccuracies arise when he is used generically to substitute for a neutral third person singular pronoun. Current research indicates that he is rarely interpreted as including she, particularly by children, who take the word quite literally. There are a number of alternatives available:
7. Recast subjects into the plural form:
“When a student appeals, he must...” becomes “When students appeal, **they must...**”
8. Recast the sentence, using 'one' or 'you':
“You should fill in the application in your own handwriting” or “One should use one's own handwriting when completing the application.”
9. Eliminate problems by deleting the pronoun:
“Each student must pay his fees by...” becomes “Each student must pay fees by...”
10. Use 'his or her' or 'he/she' instead of the masculine pronoun:
“Everyone must exercise his right...” becomes “Everyone must exercise his or her right...”

Sex Role Stereotyping and Status Issues

Stereotyping

11. Sex role stereotyping occurs when people assume that engineers, farmers, accountants, plumbers or mechanics are always men. It can also occur in portrayals which assume that women are always wives and mothers, men breadwinners or that all childcare workers and nurses are female, while firefighters and police officers are male. It is important to avoid expressions that are implicitly sexist.

Avoid	Possible Alternative
New academics require removal costs for their wives and children.	New academics require removal costs for their families.
All Administrative staff and their wives are invited.	All Administrative staff and their partners are invited.
We are looking for a supervisor who is his own man.	We are looking for a supervisor with a sense of independence and integrity.

Demearing and Patronising Expressions

12. Many women object to the insensitive use of the terms 'lady' and 'girl'. Girl should only be used for young women of primary and secondary school age. A female shop assistant should not be called a salesgirl, just as a male would not be called a salesboy. Using the term 'girl' tends to denote inferior status, as in calendar girl or girl Friday. More neutral terms for these examples would be model and office assistant.
13. Condescension or patronisation is frequently implied with the term 'lady'. Women often find words such as tea lady or cleaning lady objectionable. The terms 'attendant' or 'cleaner' are far more appropriate in today's society. Lady should only be used when gentleman would be appropriate for a male in the same situation.

**Status**

14. Equivalent terms should be used when dealing with men and women. Husband and wife are equivalent terms; man and wife are not. It is also not appropriate to address a man by his surname, while calling a woman by her given name or her title.

6 Roles & Responsibilities

1. The Heads of Departments will be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the policy and for responding to complaints.

7 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	9 June 1995	University Council	First Version
2	6 May 2009	Vice Principal (Administration)	Migrated to UOW Procedure Template as per Policy Directory Refresh



Appendix 1 - References

University Guidelines

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