

Inclusive Language Guidelines

Introduction

Southern Cross University is committed to providing an environment for staff and students that embraces and supports knowledge of and respect for equity and cultural diversity and which is free from harassment and discrimination. The University is a diverse community where staff and students alike learn and grow from diversity. The University aims to foster and encourage the opportunities that a diverse culture can bring. Universities have a particular role to play in educating staff and students of the potentially excluding nature of some language use. Language, in particular can be discriminatory through inappropriate references to sexuality, gender, disability, religion or race.

Any written or verbal form of communication used by staff and students should follow principles of inclusivity and equality. These guidelines have been developed to alert to the harm which the use of discriminatory language can create and to suggest positive and inclusive alternatives. They are not intended as an exhaustive list, but aim to increase general awareness in the use of language.

Our Values

Southern Cross University's values as set out in the Strategic Plan 2011-2015, include a commitment to:

Social justice

We advance human rights and are committed to providing opportunities for students and staff in an inclusive, culturally safe environment.

Inclusive Language

Inclusive language uses expressions and terms that are respectful of others and do not demean or stereotype them.

Inclusive language is not difficult to learn, awkward or grammatically incorrect. In many cases, it means avoiding certain expressions and selecting others that already exist in common language.

Language, Ethnicity and Culture

Australia’s population comprises people from numerous diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This diversity of Australia’s population in terms of origin, descent, language, culture, religion and other characteristics is, and should be, reflected in the way we use language.

Inclusive and non-discriminatory language enables us to describe ourselves in an integrated and inclusive way, rather than a hierarchical or separatist one. We may talk about ethnic groups as a way of describing people who share a particular national origin, religion, language, or culture. However, the term ‘ethnic group’ can be misleading as everyone belongs to an ethnic group, not just those who are of non-Anglo-Celtic origins. In Australia members of racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be described in stereotypical terms than those of the majority group

Here are some suggested forms of expression that are suitable and some that are not and should be avoided:

Use	Avoid
<p>✓ Australian If it is important to specify the cultural identity of a person. Use terms such as ‘Vietnamese-born Australian’ or ‘overseas-born Australian’. Be aware some Australians prefer not to be identified through background, origin or descent</p>	<p>✗ The words migrant or immigrant as these are terms that position people outside of the broad Australian community</p> <p>✗ Undue emphasis on ethnic differences</p> <p>✗ Avoid using the term ‘Asian’ as a generic description as there are several racial, cultural and ethnic differences within the geographic boundaries of Asia</p> <p>✗ Watch out for stereotypical notions such as ‘Asian students are diligent and hard working’</p> <p>✗ Derogatory labelling and slurs, as such terms are offensive.</p>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The University is committed to an informed respect for Indigenous identity and in Gnibi, the College of Indigenous Australian Peoples, it has a source of expertise and advice in language use. See the *Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples Need to Know Guide*.

http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gnibi/index.php/dds?cat_id=162#cat162

See also the 'Welcome to Country' at www.scu.edu.au

Use/Seek Advice	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ✓ Indigenous Australian Peoples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ In Australia, there are two distinct Indigenous peoples: Aboriginal Australian peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Avoid referring to Torres Strait Islanders as Aboriginal people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In some circumstances it may be preferable to refer to the language or cultural groups or communities to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples specifically belong: <p>e.g. the Widjabin people of the Bundjalung nation.</p> <p>Seek advice before using this or the following general types of description:</p> <p>Koori – Southern Queensland NSW - Victoria and Tasmania Anangu – Central Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Acronym 'ATSI' or 'ABL' ✗ Generic use of the word 'Aboriginal' as a collective colonial term often inappropriately used to impose a single identity on many different communities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use of word 'Aboriginal' as an attributive adjective, such as the Aboriginal People of Australia. Always use a capital A ✓ Indigenous people of Australia, nations, clans or family groups ✓ Torres Strait Islanders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Use of word 'Aboriginal' as a noun, such as 'he is an aboriginal'

- ✓ Address and refer to an Indigenous Australian person by the name which they prefer
- ✓ Language
 - ✗ Aboriginal Dialects
- ✓ Spiritual beliefs
 - ✗ Religion
- ✓ Dreaming stories
 - ✗ Myths, legends, superstition

Gender Inclusive Language

Language has often been used to reinforce gender inequality, with the bias being expressed in favour of men over women. Language that discriminates against women or men by not appropriately reflecting their role, status and contribution in society may be regarded as sexist.

Use	Avoid								
✓ Chairperson/Chair/Convenor/Coordinator	✗ Chairman								
✓ Business executive	✗ Businessman/woman								
✓ Workforce, staff	✗ Manpower								
✓ Fair play, Sporting	✗ Sportsmanship								
✓ Personal pronoun 'when students appeal, they must'	✗ Masculine pronouns 'when a student registers, he must.' Always look for alternative options before using "he" or 'his'								
✓ Assertive women and men	✗ Avoid gender based stereotypes – 'ambitious men and aggressive women'								
✓ Use similar terms when describing characteristics in men and women	✗ Check your language for inbuilt and unquestioned assumptions: For example: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>✗ <u>men words</u></td> <td><u>women words</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>✗ strong</td> <td>domineering</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✗ angry</td> <td>hysterical</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✗ firm</td> <td>stubborn</td> </tr> </table>	✗ <u>men words</u>	<u>women words</u>	✗ strong	domineering	✗ angry	hysterical	✗ firm	stubborn
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✗ strong	domineering								
✗ angry	hysterical								
✗ firm	stubborn								
✓ Ms	✗ Miss or Mrs ✗ (Some forms of address may suggest that women merit less respect than men, or that their status must be linked to their marital status)								
Staff in admin	✗ Referring to 'the girls in the office'								

Language and Disability

Discriminatory language in relation to the portrayal of people with a disability is often characterised by depersonalising them through emphasising the disability rather than the person and by stereotyping.

Use	Avoid
✓ A person with physical disabilities, paraplegic or quadriplegic	✗ Handicapped, disabled, crippled the disabled
✓ people with disabilities	
✓ Deaf (profoundly deaf) or hard of hearing (only a loss of hearing).	✗ Hearing impaired
✓ Seek advice or ask the person	
✓ A person with a mobility impairment	✗ Confined to a wheelchair
✓ Wheelchair user or person who uses a wheelchair	
✓ A person with AIDS	✗ An AIDS sufferer

Other Areas of Inappropriate Discriminatory Language

Age

Referring to age is often used to reinforce stereotypes, such as 'lacking in experience' for youth or 'incompetent' for older people. If it is relevant to refer to age, do not use terms that are demeaning or make assumptions about physical or intellectual capacity.

Sexual Preference

Any discussion of issues pertaining to sexual orientation should be accurate and informed. Lesbians and gay men should be described in terms that do not trivialise or demean them and do not encourage discrimination. Avoid negative stereotyping of supposed characteristics of lesbians or gay men. Do not assume that everyone belongs to a traditional concept of family. Use the term 'partner' for couples, avoid using language that has negative connotations, e.g. 'that's so gay'.

Just Joking! Just Quoting

Avoid jokes or humour that is based on stereotypes. They may be offensive or hurtful, or designed to be obliquely offensive by saying 'no offense, but..'

If you are quoting in an academic context, if the source has used discriminatory language, you can use 'sic' to illustrate that the quote is precise from an original and where relevant, source material should be referenced.

Implementation of these Guidelines

Any written or verbal form of communication used by staff and students should follow principles of inclusivity and equality. These guidelines are not an exhaustive list, but should be seen as useful tips to increase awareness in our use of language. Always consider different contexts and perspectives when using language concerning minority groups and practice mindfulness and courtesy. If in doubt about any use of language, seek advice from others, ask what they prefer, or for further information about equal opportunity, please contact:

Equity and Diversity Office
Southern Cross University
Phone: (02) 6626 3422
Fax: (02) 6626 9200
www.scu.edu.au/equity

References

- Using Inclusive Language – The University of Western Australia
- What Did I say – A guide to using non-discriminatory language - Queensland Government
- Guidelines for the Use of Non-Discriminatory at UTS
- Pauwels, A. (1991). *Non Discriminatory Language*, AGPS: Canberra.
- AGPS (1988). *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, Canberra