Moulton COLLEGE

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

About this guide

Language is a powerful tool for creating a welcoming and Inclusive environment, however we all know how it feels when words make us feel left out or devalued.

This guide is to help avoid inadvertently making people feel excluded or offended. It is a guide: it is by no means exhaustive or definitive. Language is always changing, and in some instances there will not be a single 'right' way to use it.

What if I get it wrong?

If you are making the effort to use respectful language and be inclusive then it's OK to make mistakes along your journey. When we are learning, we get things wrong sometimes.

If this happens, apologise, learn from your mistake and move on without getting defensive – you can keep trying and do better next time. You should, however, be aware that repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect and can be very distressing.

"
Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better. "

Maya Angelou

Age

Only refer to someone's age if it is relevant. We do not use age as a means to describe an individual or group where it is not relevant.

Use terms that are objective, such as 'child' when referring to ages 4–12 years or 'young people' or 'young adults' for those aged from 13-18 years old.

⊘ Use

- Older people
- Young people
- Learners, students
- Teenagers

⊗ Avoid

- The elderly, OAPs, pensioners
- Kids, youngsters, guys

Disability

People or individuals shouldn't be defined according to their disability/condition or labelled as a victim because of their health status.

Common phrases such as 'suffers from' or 'victim of' suggest hopelessness and passivity - these diminish the individual's life and abilities and so should be avoided.

⊘ Use

- Disabled people/person
- Wheelchair user
- People with visual impairments, blind people
- Partially sighted people
- Person with diabetes

⊗ Avoid

- The disabled, handicapped people
- Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair
- The blind
- The deaf
- Diabetic, suffers with diabetes

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity relates to the fact that no two brains are exactly alike – this variety in our biological make-up results in natural differences in communication skills, problem-solving and creative insights.

Autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) are all included in the range of neurodivergence seen in around 10% of the population. Understanding and appreciating these normal differences emphasises the importance of not using medicalised or negative language in association with neurodiversity.

✓ Use

- Neurodiverse person
- Person with autism
- Autism spectrum
- Person with dyslexia

✕ Avoid

- Autistic
- Autism spectrum
- Disorder
- High-functioning
- Low-functioning (unless an autistic person is using it)

Mental health

Everyone has mental health and the ways in which we experience it are unique to each of us. Being respectful and thoughtful in the language we use around mental health can have a very positive impact on us all.

Use person-centred language to avoid positive or negative labelling and prevent people being defined by a condition.

✓ Use

- Mental health conditions, mental health problems
- People with anxiety
- A person with depression

✕ Avoid

- Mental disorder, mental illness
- Suffers with anxiety
- Struggles with depression

Race & Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are often regarded as the same thing.

'Race; is used to describe shared physical traits, particularly skin colour and hair texture, and a shared ancestry or historical experience as a result.

'Ethnicity' is more frequently chosen by the individual and linked to cultural expression and is therefore more of a personal choice. The term is used to describe shared cultural or national identity, such as language, nationality, religious expression and other customs.

✓ Use

- Black, Asian, minority ethnic people
- Asian people, black people, white people
- Minority ethnic groups
- People of white and black Caribbean heritage

✕ Avoid

- BAME people (instead, spell out the acronym), non-white people, people of colour, coloured people
- (The) Asians, Blacks, Whites
- Ethnic minorities, minority groups
- Mixed, mixed heritage, mixed race

Religion

Only refer to people's religion if it is relevant to the information we are communicating.

In those cases use:
- Names of religions or religious groups
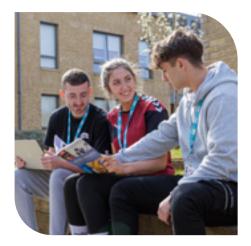- Groups of individuals from the same religion should be referred to as a community

Do not assume a person's religious belief by their name or country of origin.

✓ Use

- First name, given name
- Religion, belief
- Christian people, Hindu people, Jewish people, etc

✕ Avoid

- Christian name
- Faith
- Christians, Hindus, Jews, etc.

Socioeconomic Language

People who live or grew up in an area with less resources can often be stigmatised.

Language is a way that we can maintain people's dignity and prevent blame for the situation.

✓ Use

- Under-resourced, low opportunity
- Communities with high poverty rates
- Communities with access to fewer opportunities
- People experiencing homelessness
- Clients

✗ Avoid

- Disadvantaged
- Hard to reach
- The Homeless

Sex & Gender

This language is evolving constantly. 'Sex' is biological and relates to genes, internal/external reproductive organs inherited at birth.

'Gender' can be fixed or fluid and refers to our internal sense of who we are.

Binary gender terms (man/woman) have traditional associations with sex but now recognise how some people identify as that opposite to that assigned to them as a child.

✓ Use

- Everyone, friends, colleagues
- The person's name
- Partner, spouse
- Trans people
- Men, women
- People, humankind
- Chair
- Doctor, nurse
- Police Officer, Fire Officer

✗ Avoid

- Ladies, Gentlemen, Guys
- Girl, son, mate, love
- Girlfriend, boyfriend, wife, husband, better half
- Transgender
- Mankind
- Chairman
- Policeman, Fireman

Sexual Orientation

The Q at the end of LGBTQ can refer to 'questioning'. This term describes someone who is questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

✓ Use

- Lesbian people, gay people, bisexual people
- *Note:* 'Queer' can be used as an adjective to describe individuals who don't identify as straight, but historically it has also had negative connotations so, if used, should be used with care.
- Heterosexual people, straight people
- Sexual orientation
- Partner, spouse
- Only use 'LGBTQ+' when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based communities
- Straight CIS gendered, ally

✗ Avoid

- Lesbians, gays, bisexual
- Heterosexuals
- Girlfriend, boyfriend, wife, husband
- 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'.

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