

# Communicating Without Bias Guidelines

## Section 1 - Purpose

(1) These Guidelines aim to help staff and students recognise and avoid unintended discriminatory practices in all modes of communication. They suggest common sense principles for ensuring that the way we communicate acknowledges and respects the different experiences, lifestyles and ways of being represented in our diverse community, to support an inclusive and safe work/study environment.

### Scope

(2) These Guidelines apply to all staff and students of Charles Sturt University (the University).

## Section 2 - Glossary

(3) Nil.

## Section 3 - Policy

(4) Nil.

## Section 4 - Procedures

(5) Nil.

## Section 5 - Guidelines

### Part A - Principles

(6) Charles Sturt University is committed to preventing discrimination and harassment in order to provide a learning and employment environment that is supportive of productivity, academic achievement, and the dignity and self-esteem of every student and staff member at the University.

(7) Non-discriminatory communication requires that messages be imparted clearly, using inclusive language and presentation. The intent of inclusive language is to communicate meaning accurately and without offence or alienation by avoiding linguistic practices that demean, exclude, stereotype or trivialise people because of their membership of a particular group, because they identify themselves in a certain way or because they have a particular attribute. This requires us to examine the assumptions and values that inform the language choices we make.

(8) The responsible use of inclusive language and presentation in the preparation of administration and teaching materials, lectures, assignments and other spoken or written communications by staff members and students ensures a supportive, respectful working and learning environment that encourages participation and interaction.

(9) The use of promotional and teaching materials should reflect the social and cultural diversity of the University, the Australian community, and the increasingly international context of education and employment in Australia. Such materials should not be demeaning to, or exclusive of, individuals or groups of people. However, where potentially offensive visual (or textual) material is used intentionally for teaching purposes, then captions or verbal explanations as to the relevance of the non-inclusive material should be provided.

## Part B - Language and Gender

(10) The role of language in reinforcing gender stereotypes is widely recognised. Many common words and expressions are experienced as 'sexist' because they imply a value system that gives unequal status to women and men. As our language is the cultural filter through which we perceive or construct what is to us 'real' or 'normal', continuing to use unexamined and value laden linguistic practices can render women invisible or trivialise and denigrate their contributions to society. Non-discriminatory communication is gender inclusive. That is, it treats men and women equally and does not exclude or privilege one gender or another.

### Words that Reinforce Invisibility

(11) Much of the sexism inherent in the English language stems from the absence of a gender neutral singular pronoun and the use of man as a generic term. In the past it was accepted English to use he (him, his) as a word of common or indeterminate gender. This can be confusing or misleading, as it is difficult to disassociate the pronoun he (his) from its male denotation. Such use of language renders women invisible. Good communicators will look for ways around this limitation.

(12) Do not use he, him, himself or his when referring to both men and women.

(13) He and she, she/he, s/he or his/her are appropriate, but considered cumbersome by some people. Accepted alternatives include the following.

Instead of:	Use:
The student must submit his assignment by Monday.	Students must submit their assignments by Monday. (Plural) Students must submit the assignment by Monday. (Personal pronoun omitted) Each student must submit their assignment by Monday (use of they as a neutral singular pronoun) Assignments must be submitted by Monday. (Passive voice)

(14) Avoid the use of man as a generic, or compound words involving the syllable, -man. Use a gender inclusive alternative instead.

Instead of:	Use:
chairman	presiding officer, chairperson, chair, convenor, coordinator, president
to man	to staff, operate, attend
manpower	human resources, labour force, personnel, workers, workforce
spokesman	spokesperson, representative
the origin of man	the origin of humanity
manmade	manufactured, synthetic, machine-made, hand crafted

(15) Avoid generalisations and cliches that overlook women's contributions.

Instead of:	Use:

brotherhood of man	human family, global community
forefathers	ancestors, forebears
founding fathers	founders, pioneers

## Unnecessary References to Gender

(16) Avoid irrelevant, gratuitous gender descriptions that imply deviation from the norm. Women and men work everywhere and occupational titles should acknowledge this fact.

Instead of:	Use:
a woman doctor	a doctor
a male nurse	a nurse
the cleaning lady	the cleaner
authoress	author
actress	actor
usherette	usher

## Stereotypes

(17) Avoid descriptions or assumptions based on stereotypes. When referring to the same characteristic or pattern of behaviour in women and men, use parallel language

Instead of:	Use:
ambitious men and aggressive women	ambitious women and men, aggressive men and women
workers with wives and children to support	workers with families to support

(18) Avoid gratuitous references to physical characteristics and undue emphasis on a woman's family role.

Instead of:	Use:
Jane Andrews is an attractive and industrious student.	Jane Andrews is an industrious student.
A mother of three has been appointed as Head of Law.	Associate Professor Ellen Bates has been appointed as Head of Law.

## Expressions that can Trivialise

(19) Avoid expressions that can be experienced as patronising and demeaning - for example, using endearments such as dear, darl, love, sweetie, etc. to refer to people in situations that do not call for such intimacy, or referring to adult women as girls in a context where male adults are referred to as men.

Instead of:	Use:
the girls in the office	the staff or office assistants
ladies	women (except when used in parallel with gentlemen)

(20) Avoid sexist descriptions, compliments and put-downs such as:

- a. You're not just a pretty face.
- b. He played like a girl.
- c. You're pretty smart for a woman.
- d. She thinks like a man.

(21) Steer clear of sexual innuendoes or jokes that trivialise or demean either women or men, e.g. I wish that a woman would sexually harass me.

### **Titles and Modes of Address**

(22) If you know a person's preferred title, use it. Otherwise, be consistent in the use of titles and salutations. Use a neutral title, academic title or no title.

(23) In selecting a title or salutation, do not make assumptions about the gender of anyone who is unknown to you.

(24) Use alphabetical order for lists of names unless order of seniority is more important.

(25) When describing relationships, use the term partner rather than husband or wife to include those in de facto and same-sex relationships

Instead of:	Use:
Miss or Mrs	Ms (this title is parallel to Mr) - unless the woman prefers Miss or Mrs
Dr Joe Black and Anne Smith	Dr Joe Black and Ms Anne Smith
Maria Francesco and Dr Wang	Ass Prof Francesco and Dr Wang; or Maria Francesco and Lee Wang
Dear Sir	Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Madam or Sir, Dear Colleague
John Brown and wife	John and Sue Brown (if both names are known); John Brown and partner (if the name of the partner is not known)

## **Part C - Language, Sexuality and Gender Identity**

(26) Using inclusive communication is an integral part of creating a safe environment for students and staff members whose sexual orientation or experience of gender identity is different to the dominant social paradigm. Many of the concepts and categories used in the past to describe sexual diversity and behaviour that doesn't conform to gender stereotypes are imbued with normative values and homophobic social attitudes. Much of the colloquial language still used to label people or discuss issues of sexual and/or gender identity is derogatory and emotive, fuelling discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

(27) The following list provides a starting point for a shared understanding of some commonly accepted terms related to sexual and gender identity.

bisexual	A person who is sexually attracted to both males and females
gay	A widely accepted term for someone whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is towards people of the same gender - usually applied to men but sometimes used by women
GLBTI	Acronym that stands for gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans (transgender and transsexual) and intersex. Other variants may include queer and questioning (to incorporate those who are not certain of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity)
homosexual	A clinical term for a person whose primary sexual attraction is towards people of the same sex -the term carries a negative connotation due to its historical association with deviance and mental illness

homophobia	Irrational fear and hatred of gay people or of behaviour or attributes that don't conform to rigid sex role stereotypes and are attributed to being gay
intersex	Someone born with and living with reproductive organs and/or sex chromosomes that are not exclusively male or female (previously termed "hermaphrodite")
lesbian	A woman whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is towards other women
men who have sex with men	Men who engage in sexual activity with other men but do not necessarily identify as gay
queer	Once used to ostracise and insult, the word has been reclaimed by activists to encompass people who do not identify as heterosexual - includes lesbians, gays, bisexuals transgender and intersex people
trans	An umbrella term that includes transgender, transsexual, etc.
transgender person	An umbrella term used to refer to someone who does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming. Transgendered people may or may not take steps to live as a different gender.
transsexual	A term commonly used to refer to someone who transitions from one sex/gender to another - usually includes hormone replacement therapy and may include surgery. Gender transitioning is about a person's core sense of their gender, not their sexual identity. The sexuality of transgendered people can cover the full human spectrum - they may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. Generally, people who cross gender lines identify with what they experience as their innate gender, rather than as transgender or transsexual.
women who have sex with women	Women who engage in sexual activity with other women but do not necessarily identify as lesbian

(28) Some basic principles for facilitating communication that acknowledges sexual diversity and different experiences of gender identity include the following:

- a. Don't assume that everyone has a heterosexual outlook or identity. Avoid hetero-normative language and concepts such as the natural attraction between the sexes.
- b. Recognise the diversity of family structures and relationships. Do not assume that someone's partner is of the opposite sex. If you do not know those to whom you are referring, use the generic term partner instead of spouse, husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend.
- c. Do not introduce discussions of sexual orientation gratuitously and, when there is discussion of such issues, try to ensure it is accurate and informed.
- d. Avoid potentially derogatory terms such as poofster, lezzo, lemon, faggot, fairy, tranny. Some previously derogatory terms have been reclaimed by members of the GLBTI community but, as a general rule, it is best for those who do not claim the identity themselves to avoid the use of these terms.
- e. Be alert to, and avoid, common stereotypes - for example: representing gay men as effeminate, lesbians as masculine or AIDS as a gay disease.
- f. Avoid turns of phrase that trivialise or demean the experience of people with a different sexuality or gender identity - such as:
  - i. What a waste he is gay.
  - ii. That is so gay (as a put-down).
  - iii. He makes an ugly woman (referring to someone who is transgender).
  - iv. He/she is just a floater / sitting on the fence (referring to a bi-sexual person).

## Part D - Language, Ethnicity and Culture

(29) Australia has a richly diverse population, comprising of people from different racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, some of whom are Indigenous. However, such diversity can be rendered invisible when texts

and imagery convey a predominantly Anglo-Celtic image of Australia. Language plays a crucial role in mediating social relations and group dynamics. It can reinforce both negative and positive perceptions about other people. When it is used in a way that acknowledges and is respectful of cultural differences, it supports social cohesion and inclusiveness.

(30) Avoid linguistic omissions and imagery suggesting that the dominant ethnicity is the norm, thereby implicitly excluding or marginalizing people of other ethnic backgrounds. For instance, using the term Australian to designate Anglo-Celtic residents of Australia while using the terms migrant or ethnic to describe people of non Anglo-Celtic background born in Australia, marks the latter as others while failing to recognise either their cultural origins or their status as Australian citizens. Every person belongs to an ethnic group and all people who are permanent residents or citizens of Australia are Australians.

(31) When it is relevant to refer to a demographic that specifically denotes people born outside Australia or Australians of non Anglo-Celtic background, use one of the following:

- a. Immigrant (as opposed to migrant), denoting someone from another country who has become resident in Australia);
- b. People born overseas;
- c. People whose first language is other than English;
- d. People of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

(32) Avoid irrelevant identification of a person or group by race or ethnic origin. Usually this practice is applied asymmetrically. For example, the media is more likely to indicate the cultural backgrounds of crime suspects if they belong to a minority ethnic group rather than if they are of Anglo-Celtic background.

(33) If it is important to specify the specific descent or ethnicity of a person or group to distinguish between people born in Australia, use a qualifier such as:

- a. Vietnamese-born Australians;
- b. Croatian-speaking Australians;
- c. Australians of Greek descent or background.

(34) Recognise and acknowledge the diversity within and between racial and ethnic groups. Be cautious of using broad categorisations to include people with very diverse cultural backgrounds - for example, using the umbrella term Asian to describe people (or their descendents) from such different countries as China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia.

(35) Do not make inappropriate generalisations about ethnicity and religion. For example, not all people from India are Hindus, and not all Arab people are Muslims.

(36) Avoid stereotypical assumptions that attribute particular behaviours or traits to specific nationalities or ethnic or racial groups. For example:

- a. passionate Spanish;
- b. whingeing Poms;
- c. People of African origin are natural athletes;
- d. Muslim women are passive and subservient;
- e. Asian students are diligent and hard working.

(37) Stereotypes oversimplify the complexity of cultural difference while denying individual differences between people from the same linguistic or ethnic background.

(38) Avoid gratuitous or disparaging remarks about a person's accent. Unless raised as bilingual, most people who learn a second language will sound different from a native speaker, depending on the degree of phonetic divergence with their first language. If unsure about what someone is saying, politely ask them to repeat themselves.

(39) Do not use derogatory terms that are intended to signify a person's race or ethnicity. Racially-based name calling is a form of racial harassment and will not be tolerated by the University. Also avoid jokes or humour with racial overtones as they are offensive to many people.

(40) Use language that is accurate and non-emotive when discussing potentially contentious social issues that can fuel racism, such as immigration and refugees.

Instead of:	Use:
boat-people, queue jumper, illegal immigrant, refo	asylum seeker - a person who has fled their own country for fear of persecution, seeking protection as a refugee in another country (a right recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights); refugee - a person who has been assessed and meets the criteria for refugee status under the Refugee Convention.

(41) The naming systems used by people of different religious and language backgrounds can differ markedly from that of the English-speaking world, with its roots in Christianity. In some cultures no part of the name corresponds to the Western concept of first name (individual name) and surname/family name, or the order, significance and use of the different elements making up a name may vary significantly. It is important to check correct usage with the person themselves when the naming system is unfamiliar.

(42) People immigrating to an English-speaking country will often adapt their name to conform to Western naming practice. Using terminology that is more broadly applicable assists this translation.

Instead of:	Use:
Christian name, first name	given name, personal name, preferred name
last name, surname	family name (or family name/surname)

(43) Avoid shortening the names of people from culturally diverse backgrounds without gaining their permission first.

## Part E - Language, Naming Protocols and Indigenous Australians

(44) The terms Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander have been used to describe First Nation peoples of Australia only since the time of colonisation. Before the arrival of Europeans it is estimated there were between 200-300 different language groups and many different Aboriginal nations across the Australian continent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identified themselves by geographical region (Country) and language. There was no common language across the continent and therefore no common word that denoted all Indigenous people of Australia. The terms indigenous and aboriginal, which are generic terms denoting first peoples of any country, are capitalised when referring to Indigenous people of Australia.

(45) Avoid the use of collective nouns such as Aborigines and Islanders. Preferred terms are:

- a. Aboriginal peoples (covering hundreds of culturally and linguistically diverse Aboriginal nations living in mainland Australia);
- b. Torres Strait Islander people (covering diverse island communities located in the Torres Strait); and
- c. Indigenous Australians, the first Australians or the first people of Australia (covering both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). However, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not identify with the term Indigenous and prefer the former descriptors.

It is acceptable to use Aboriginal as an adjective but not as a noun, e.g. Aboriginal students but not Aboriginals.

(46) Aboriginal does not apply to Torres Strait Islanders, and should not be used to refer collectively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

(47) Abbreviated terms such as ATSI or TSI should be avoided to show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

(48) Some generic words used by Aboriginal people to refer to themselves that are associated with broad geographic areas include:

- a. Koori - NSW and Southern QLD;
- b. Koorie - Victoria;
- c. Murri - QLD and north-west NSW;
- d. Noonga/Nyoongah - South Western Australia;
- e. Nunga - South Australia;
- f. Yolngu - Arnhem Land;
- g. Anangu - Central Australia;
- h. Palawa - Tasmania.

It is not appropriate to assume that you can refer to Aboriginal people by these terms unless granted permission to do so. Such terms are specific to the areas in which they apply and it may be inappropriate to use them in situations where Aboriginal people from other areas are present.

(49) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may use their language or clan names rather than generic terms to refer to themselves. For example, the Aboriginal people of the areas in which CSU's campuses are located describe themselves as Wiradjuri, Gandangara, Ngunawal or Biripai (or Biripi) people.

(50) It is always important to check with the local Indigenous community as to the preferred language to use when referring to Indigenous people in the region. Within the University, the Centre for Indigenous Studies or Indigenous Student Services can provide advice on language or other protocols associated with ensuring respect and sensitivity around Indigenous issues.

(51) In Aboriginal communities particular men and women recognised for their wisdom and their knowledge of their culture, who have the authority to speak about culture, are known as Elders. In some communities this term may denote status as a person who has been initiated through traditional law. Some Elders are referred to as Aunty and Uncle but you should only use these titles when given permission to do so. Some Aboriginal people have both an English name and an Aboriginal language name. If in doubt about what name or title you should use, always ask.

(52) It is important to note that in many Aboriginal communities there is a range of protocols that are observed when an Aboriginal person dies. These can include prohibitions against using the name of the deceased or displaying their image or broadcasting their voice. Such prohibitions should be observed and respected when working with Aboriginal organisations and communities.

(53) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people define themselves by their culture, 'country' and relationships to family and community, not by the colour of their skin (much like most other people). Historically, colonial governments attempted to classify Indigenous Australians according to parentage and skin colour, e.g.: full-blood; half-caste; quarter-caste; quadroon; or part-Aborigine. Discriminatory treatment (such as the removal of children) was based on these inaccurate classifications. Such terms are extremely offensive to Aboriginal people and should never be used.

(54) Colonialists and early anthropologists had a very limited understanding of Indigenous languages and cultures. Interpreting what they saw from their own cultural perspective, they lacked the concepts to comprehend the sophistication, complexity and diversity of Indigenous languages and cultural practices. Lack of understanding fuelled



prejudice and discrimination, some of which carries over to the present. It is inaccurate, misleading and offensive to describe Indigenous cultures or activities using terms such as primitive, savage, stone-age, nomadic or walkabout. Similarly, representations of Australia's history which ignore Indigenous peoples' prior occupation of Australia or that Australia was not settled peacefully but was invaded and colonised with devastating impact on Indigenous populations and way of life, are also misleading and offensive.

Instead of:	Use:
settlement	invasion, colonisation, occupation
Captain Cook discovered Australia.	Captain Cook was the first Englishman to map the east coast of 'New Holland'.
Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth were the first men to cross the Blue Mountains.	Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth were the first European men to cross the Blue Mountains, with guidance from local Aboriginal people.

## Part F - Language and Disability

(55) The language we use around disability often reflects the lack of knowledge and sometimes fearful attitudes we have about it. It is common to focus on disability and the incapacity we presume it entails. Instead, inclusive language seeks to acknowledge a person's humanity and individual agency, recognising disability as only one dimension in the rich complexity of their life.

(56) Focus on the person first, rather than the disability. Do not call attention to a person's disability unless there is an appropriate reason for doing so. However, neither should disability be hidden, ignored or avoided.

(57) Avoid the use of collective terms and derogatory labels to describe people with disability. Use of collective terms and labels denies individuality, and can be de-personalising and offensive. Do not use terms like victim or sufferer, which imply powerlessness and dehumanise the person. On the other hand, stay clear of euphemisms such as physically challenged and differently abled, which can be experienced as patronising.

(58) Terms that define disability as a limitation do not reflect the actual experience people have of disability. If they experience disadvantage it is largely because of their physical and social environment, rather than because of disability per se.

Instead of:	Use:
handicapped, disabled, special needs	a person with disability/people with disability
the blind	a person who is blind, partially sighted, visually impaired or has low vision.
the deaf	a person who is deaf or hearing impaired, a person with a hearing impairment Note: The Deaf or Deaf people (uppercase) is used by people who identify as part of the Deaf community and use sign language.
wheelchair bound, cripple	a person who uses a wheelchair, a person with a mobility impairment
mentally handicapped, retarded, slow learner, feeble minded	a person with learning difficulties, with a learning disability or intellectual disability
victim of AIDS or AIDS sufferer	a person who is HIV positive, a person who is living with AIDS
spastic, paraplegic, epileptic	a person with/who has cerebral palsy, paraplegia, epilepsy
mentally ill, schizophrenic	a person with a mental illness or a psychological or psychiatric impairment
mongoloid	a person with Down Syndrome
disabled toilet	accessible toilet

(59) Avoid comparisons which imply that disability is freakish or abnormal, such as using normal or able bodied to refer to people without disability.

(60) Where possible, find out how the individual refers to disability and use the language with which they are comfortable.

## Part G - Language and Age

(61) Inclusive language reflects the fact that people of all ages are productive and contributing members of society. Age is not an indicator of ability.

(62) Refer to a person's age only where it is relevant to the situation. It is also good practice to avoid age related labelling unless actually relevant. Where reference is made to a particular age group, use language that is respectful and free of connotation.

Instead of:	Use:
(when not referring to children) girls, boys, kids, juveniles	young people, younger people
the elderly, the aged, pensioners, old woman/man, oldies, geriatrics	older people, older adults, mature aged, senior citizens

(63) Do not stereotype or trivialise people, based on generalisations or unfounded assumptions about their age group. For example:

- a. She's young to be a manager.
- b. He's over the hill, or, past his use by date.
- c. She's done an amazing job for a person her age.

## Status and Details

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