

Gender Inclusive Language at UM

What is gender inclusive language?

Gender Inclusive Language is speaking or writing in a way that includes everyone in your target audience by ensuring they are not excluded due to gender terminology. This means that regardless of their gender identity, they feel addressed and included through your choice of words. Gender inclusive language is also language that appropriately reflects the diversity we see in the population, and a way to accurately report on findings and events.

Why use gender inclusive language at UM?

The [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#) highlights UM's core values being diversity and inclusion, sustainability, mutual respect, integrity, democratic principles and transparency. At UM, everyone has the right to participate, study, work, and engage in UM activities regardless of their gender identity. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make sure the language we use actively welcomes everyone at UM to ensure inclusion and mutual respect.

Why is gender inclusive language such a big thing?

Gender (assumptions) often appear in general language use, and to varying degrees in different languages. Often, the way we write or speak changes depending on the perceived gender of the person or people we are talking to, or about. The issue is that these assumptions are not always correct, and incorrect assumptions can be hurtful. Watch our [video](#) "Sex and Gender: What? Why?, and How?" for more information.

The good news

Language is flexible and evolves, and gender inclusive language already exists and is easy to use, even if it takes a little bit of practice. For example, this introduction is written in a gender inclusive manner, and below you will find more tips for how to ensure you use gender inclusive language when writing or speaking, to/about different people.

Tips and examples

	Tip	Inclusive example	Inclusive vocabulary	Exclusive example
1	Use general terms for people	<u>Human beings</u> evolved	Humankind, staff, people, workers, employees, personnel	<u>Man</u> evolved
2	Using 'they' for a generic person	A person is the best judge of <u>their</u> own needs. The student is responsible for their exam registration. The PhD candidate must ensure their supervisor signs the form.	They, them, theirs	A person is the best judge of his or her own needs. The student is responsible for his/her exam registration. The PhD candidate must ensure his supervisor signs the form
3	Rewrite sentences to avoid the need for any pronouns	The supervisor decides on the student's final grade.		His supervisor decides on the student's final grade.

4	Avoid gendered terminology	Research scientists often neglect their <u>spouses</u> and children. Being a <u>parent</u> takes a lot of time, and is a challenge when combined with being a <u>doctor</u> .	Parenting, nurturing, salesperson, chairperson, employee, doctor, nurse, surgeon, tutor, lecturer, moderator, discussion leader,	Research scientists often neglect their <u>wives</u> and children. Being a <u>mother</u> takes a lot of time, and is a challenge when combined with being a <u>female doctor</u> .
5	Avoid gendered addresses	Dear Guests Dear Colleagues Greetings Welcome everyone Esteemed guests	Dear travellers, Dear students,	Ladies and Gentlemen
6	Avoid gendered adjectives	Cautious men and women, cautious people; Timid men and women, timid people	Person, people, student, staff, team member Important- even when talking about people whose gender you do know, be consistent in the adjectives you use for all people.	Cautious men and timid women
7	Use, and ask for pronouns, or self-identified pronouns	Hi, my name is Ophélie, my pronouns are she/hers, what are yours? Please indicate your pronouns so we can address you correctly.	She/her/hers He/him/his They/them/theirs These are the most commonly known and used; note that individuals may have alternative pronouns.	Assume you know someone's pronouns, without first finding out.
8	Differentiate between gender, sex, pronouns	Sex does not define gender, nor do either of these define which pronouns a person uses. You cannot infer one from the other, if this is information you need, ask politely. Alternatively, use the gender inclusive language listed above.	Gender: woman, man, non-binary	

Definitions of gender terms

Agender	Those who identify as having no gender or being without a gender identity.
Bigender	Having two genders and exhibiting characteristics of both
Cis/Cisgender	Gender identity matches gender assigned at birth
FtM / MtF	Abbreviations for female to male, and male to female, commonly used to describe a trans person's identity or journey.
Gender	A social construct to classify a person as a man, a woman, or another identity.

Gender confirmation surgery	GCS, surgeries trans* people might have to help their bodies match their gender identity.
Gender expression	The outwardly, visible expression of one's gender through appearance such as but not limited to hair and clothing.
Gender fluid	Describes someone whose gender identity shifts
Gender identity	A sense of one's self as woman, man, trans, or another identity regardless of whether this matches the sex and gender assigned at birth.
Gender neutral	Relating to people, and not especially to women or men
Gender non-conforming	Adjective for people who do not subscribe to social expectations of gender roles and gender expressions.
Intersex	Someone born with neither or both male and female biological characteristics.
Non-Binary	A gender identity that goes beyond the male/female gender binary.
Outing	Exposing someone's sexual or gender identity without their consent and permission.
Passing	When a trans person does not "appear" trans, and passes for a cis person.
Pronouns	Linguistic tool to refer to someone, such as he/him, she/her, they/them
Sex assigned at birth	The sex (and thus often also gender) that is externally identified at birth.
Trans*	Umbrella term for transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary people.
Transgender	Someone whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex/gender at birth.

Sentence examples:

Form	Example
They	Cleo is French. They study politics.
Them	Every client got a care package delivered to them. Yesterday they got a care package delivered to them.
Their	Each child played with their parent. As a child, Cleo played with their parent.
Theirs	The cup of coffee is theirs.
Themselves (or themselves)	A private person usually keeps to themselves [or themselves].

Form	Example
He	Mark is British. He studies economics.
Him	Yesterday, Mark got a care package delivered to him.
His	When he was younger, Mark played with his parent.
His	The cup of coffee is his.
Himself	Mark is a private person, he usually keeps to himself.

Form	Example
She	Tay is from Kenya. She is a teacher.

Her	Yesterday, Tay got a care package delivered to her.
Her	When she was younger, Tay played with her parent.
Hers	The cup of coffee is hers.
Herself	Tay is a private person, she usually keeps to herself.

(Optional)

Exercise for practice

Re-write the following sentences to ensure they could apply to anyone at UM:

1. The PhD candidate and his supervisor meet regularly to discuss his progress.
2. If a student falls ill and misses her exam, she must register for a resit.
3. Marianne is a female doctor, and has three children.