McMaster University

Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Complete Policy Title:	Policy Number (if applicable):
POLICY STATEMENT ON INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS	N/A
Approved by:	Date of Most Recent Approval:
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Responsible Executive(s) :	Enquiries:
Secretary of the Senate	**Policy (University Secretariat)**

DISCLAIMER: *If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails.*

McMaster is committed to the use of inclusive language and imagery in all University communications.

The use of language or visual imagery that may bias perceptions by excluding or stereotyping individuals or groups is unacceptable.

This policy is in keeping with McMaster's commitment to promoting a place of work and study that is free of discrimination and harassment.

All new material must be prepared in accordance with this policy. All existing documents, publications and visual materials originated by the University must be reviewed as they are updated and revised as necessary to conform to this policy. This process must be completed by December 1992.

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COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

McMaster University has adopted a policy of using inclusive language and visual material.

This guide is intended as a resource to assist the students and employees of McMaster in developing an approach to written, oral and visual communication that is accurate and free of bias.

The University acknowledges that for those people unfamiliar with using inclusive language it may seem a little awkward at first, and require a conscious effort to be used effectively. However, initial awkwardness can be overcome with sensitivity, commitment, and practice.

The following general guidelines give some possible ways for ensuring that communications do not stereotype or exclude.

1.   TITLES OF ADDRESS

Designations of sex and marital status (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms) for example, on forms, in correspondence or minutes, are often unnecessary in addressing or referring to individuals and should be omitted, unless specified by the individual or called for by the situation.

First name or initial, and last name should be used.

When it is appropriate to use academic titles they should be used in a parallel and consistent manner, for example use Dr. Smith and Prof. Jones or J. Smith and H. Jones rather than Dr. Smith and H. Jones.

Generic forms of address commonly used in correspondence or oral presentations include colleague, associate, members, faculty, staff and students.

2.   OCCUPATIONAL TITLES

Job titles should describe the role or responsibility of the position, not the sex of the incumbent for example, firefighter, custodian, and mail carrier.

The use of the word "man" or "woman" as a suffix for example, foreman, reinforces occupational stereotypes and should be avoided.

3. **PRONOUNS**

Since the English language lacks a singular pronoun that is sex neutral, the masculine pronoun has traditionally been used to refer to a neutral noun. However, the generic use of masculine pronouns is exclusionary, confusing, and ambiguous.

Preferred alternatives include repetition of the noun, the use of plural nouns and pronouns, rewording to eliminate the reference to sex, the use of the passive voice, or the use of double or alternate pronouns (her/his).

4. **TERMINOLOGY**

The use of prefixes, suffixes words or expressions which exclude or stereotype individuals or groups should be eliminated and inclusive terms substituted. For example, "level one student" should be substituted for "freshman", likewise "given name" for "Christian name".

5. **WORD ORDER**

Masculine nouns and pronouns commonly precede the feminine equivalent, for example, "husband and wife", "his and hers". It is preferable to alternate word order.

6. **GRAPHICS**

Visual materials should not consistently exclude representations of women, native people, members of visible minorities and persons with disabilities.

Members of all groups should be depicted with equal dignity. Members of the designated groups should be portrayed at all levels of authority and participation, and not in stereotyped roles or activities.

7. **RESOURCES**

Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women./ Guidelines for Nonsexist Writing./ March 1984. CAI SW 1084G75 /Government Documents./

Council of Ontario Universities./ Employment Equity for Women: A University Handbook./ 1988, pp. 147-54. CA20NDF 14088E52 ENG./Government Documents/

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Eichler, Margrit, and Jeanne Lapoint./ On the Treatment of the Sexes in Research./ For the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1985. CAI SW 85057 /Government Documents./

International Association of Business Communications. / Without Bias: A Guidebook for Non-Discriminatory Communication./ n.d. HF5549.5 .C6W57 /Innis./

Maggio, Rosalie. / The Nonsexist Word Finder: A Dictionary of Gender Free Usage./ Phoenix, AZ: Ornyx Press, 1987. PE 1689 .M23/Mills./

Miller, Casey and Kate Swift. / The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers./ New York: Harper and Row, 1988. PN218M5 / Mills./

Rancy, Catherine and Manju Sah. / Guidelines for Non-Sexist Language./ Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. CAI SW 1084G75 EXF /Government Documents./

Further information or assistance with communications is available from the Office of Public Relations, GH 121, Ext. 24073 or the Employment Equity Office, GH 311, Ext. 27286.

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