

UNSW Faculty of Science

CLASSROOM INCLUSIVITY GUIDELINES



WHY HAVE CLASSROOM INCLUSIVITY GUIDELINES?

Inclusion is when “a diversity of people (e.g. of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation”.

Creating an inclusive classroom environment enables students to feel supported and a strong sense of belonging, regardless of identity or background. UNSW has numerous resources to assist with this, including:

[UNSW Ally](#), [Psychology and Wellness](#), [Equitable Learning Services](#), [International Student Support](#), [Student Support Advisors](#), [Academic Skills](#), [Nura Gili](#), [Pregnancy and Parenting Support](#) , [Diversity Champions](#).

Research indicates that many students are more likely to flourish academically and personally in academic settings that acknowledge and respect students’ personal experiences, identities and backgrounds. Ensuring that our learning environments are inclusive is crucial to realising UNSW Science’s EDI vision.

UNSW FACULTY OF SCIENCE EDI VISION

The UNSW Faculty of Science aims to provide an equitable place of work and study that will stimulate innovation, productivity, and progress and will enable staff and students to realise their potential regardless of background.

We hold that diversity is required to foster an environment that produces robust, credible and pioneering science of global impact and trains the next generation of scientists.

UNSW Science commits to reducing barriers that impede equity, diversity, and inclusion via implementation of initiatives and practices that will benefit staff and students alike.

TOP FIVE GUIDELINES

The five guidelines below give an overview of ways that you can foster an inclusive educational environment.

1. Use Diverse Course Content

Use resources, examples and content from diverse sources and academics such as those from Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse and LGBTIQ+ backgrounds, and always aim for a gender balance.

2. Enable Students to Provide Pronouns and Preferred Name

Give students (where practical) an opportunity to tell you what their pronouns (e.g., she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs) and preferred name are at the beginning of term in a private manner such as through email or a confidential survey. Use these names and pronouns consistently with the support of the student, their classmates, and technology. It is important to note that not all students will feel comfortable disclosing this information. However, introducing yourself using your name and pronouns is a great way to establish an inclusive climate.

3. Enable Accessibility Awareness

Highlight that students with disabilities or students who are carers may be eligible for registration with Equitable Learning Services (ELS). Ensure reasonable adjustments for individual students (reflected in their documentation from ELS) are addressed. Know your obligations under the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#). Aim to make your course as accessible as possible (both physically and digitally) by, for example, captioning videos, speaking slowly and clearly into a microphone, avoiding jargon without adequate introduction, ensuring accessible entrances, and using assistive technologies like hearing loops if required.

Accessibility can also mean making lecture recordings and slides available on request to students who for a variety of reasons are unable to access or attend every lecture.

4. Use Inclusive Language

Recognise that intentional or unintentional racist, classist, homophobic, ableist, ill-informed and/or disparaging comments or content can be harmful or damaging to students from minority identities. Use inclusive language and avoid stereotyping.

5. Don't Assume

Avoid making assumptions about student's identities. Students are the experts of their own experiences and identities. Generally speaking, it is not your role to query a student's identity, circumstances, background or provisions. Follow UNSW protocol where applicable.

The rest of the guidelines lay out detailed suggestions regarding [\(I\) inclusive language](#), [\(II\) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#), [\(III\) disability](#), and [\(IV\) caring responsibilities](#).

DETAILED GUIDELINES

I. Inclusive Language

The use of inclusive language in an educational setting creates affirming, welcoming and safe learning environments that enable student wellbeing and success.

The broadest advice we can provide is to avoid making assumptions regarding a student's identity. In all cases, carry out interactions in a manner that is respectful of the diversity of identities and backgrounds of your students. Check that you are not assuming students' gender identity, cultural background, religious orientation, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or any other aspect of their identity. When it is relevant to know, ask politely. These simple steps will advance the inclusivity climate of your classroom.

In the case that a student 'calls out' your use of non-inclusive language, avoid being defensive. Acknowledge it in the moment, and later reflect on how you might ensure inclusivity in the future. Consider discussing the matter with the student privately or contacting your [School's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion representative](#) for further advice.

In the case that a student in your classroom uses non-inclusive language you can address their comments swiftly and calmly to build trust and create a culturally safe classroom for all. An appropriate response in this situation could be "That is a common misconception or stereotype about X and can be really hurtful. I'd prefer that we didn't use that language/those assumptions in this classroom please."

Next, we provide tips on how to use inclusive language regarding preferred pronouns and names, gender and sexuality, and cultural background.

➤ **Pronouns and Names**

- Course convenors can enable students to provide their pronouns and preferred names privately via email or a confidential survey at the beginning of the Term. It is important to note that not all students will feel comfortable disclosing this information.
- Introducing yourself using your name and pronouns is a great way to establish an inclusive climate.

- Understand that preferred names and pronouns can stem from a variety of wishes on the part of the student. Some students with non-Western names opt to adopt a Western name at university. Students are not obligated to do so, therefore efforts should be made to correctly pronounce non-Western names if that is the student's preference. Other students may be gender non-conforming, non-binary, or transgender. It is not your role to query why a student might have a preferred name or pronouns that differ from the official university record. Instead, note their preference and make all attempts to use their pronouns and name from that point forward.
- If you make a mistake with a student's preferred name or pronouns, simply apologise and correct yourself.
- If a student you have known previously by a different gender has now transitioned, ensure that you use the name and pronouns they request. Note, UNSW allows for use of preferred names however formal name changes require documentary evidence. If a student needs support in undertaking this process, refer them to an [Student Support Advisor](#) and these resources: <https://www.edi.unsw.edu.au/students/lgbtiq-inclusion>

➤ **Gender and Sexuality**

- Aim to use gender neutral terms and phrases (e.g. "humankind, scientist, best person for the job" as opposed to "mankind, female scientist, best man for the job")
- Avoid conveying gendered stereotypes (e.g., "You're dressed like a man today", "Women aren't as good at maths")
- Avoid using only heteronormative examples. For example, instead of only speaking about husbands and wives, consider referring to same-sex relationships and/or using gender neutral terminology like "partner" or "spouse".
- Review your content. Are you featuring one gender more often in your examples, assigned readings or resources? Aim to achieve a balanced portfolio of examples about gender where possible.

➤ **Cultural Background and Belief Systems**

- Avoid assuming someone else's cultural background. If it is necessary to know, ask in a respectful manner.
- Don't respond to someone telling you where they are from with "Where are you really from?"
- Avoid stereotyping individuals, including positive stereotyping "You would never know you're from X, your English is so good!" "You'll find this easy, since you're X."

- Do not call upon an individual student to speak to their culture (e.g., “X, tell us about what people from your culture might say about this”). Not only is this an unreasonable request, given that one person can only represent their own views, but it puts the student in an uncomfortable situation. Instead ask “Would anyone like to share their experience or understanding of this?”. This gives students an opportunity to participate should they wish without putting them on the spot.
- Review your content. Do your examples, assigned readings or resources feature one race more than others? Aim to achieve cultural diversity where possible.

II. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

UNSW has an [Indigenous Strategy](#) which highlights the university’s vision and goals for Indigenous inclusion. The detailed suggestions under the section above, *Cultural Background and Belief Systems*, are also relevant.

➤ **Inclusion**

- Inclusive practice should always be incorporated regardless of whether you have Indigenous students in your class or not. Furthermore, never assume that you have no Indigenous students in your classroom.
- Consider beginning the first class of semester, classes in the field or special events class with an Acknowledgement of Country, Nura Gili provides information and correct protocol for this here: <http://www.nuragili.unsw.edu.au/atcandwtc>
- Highlight to students that “The Science of Indigenous Knowledges” general education course is available <https://www.handbook.unsw.edu.au/undergraduate/courses/2021/ATSI2015?year=2021>
- Highlight Indigenous role models and researchers in your courses and seek advice as to how to incorporate Indigenous knowledges (regardless of whether you have Indigenous students in your class). See Appendix B of this document for a list of Indigenous STEM researchers and websites that feature Indigenous research.

➤ **Language**

- Use “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples” to refer to Indigenous Australians as a collective and Indigenous person/Aboriginal person/Torres Strait Islander person to refer in the singular.
- Avoid the use of terms like “tribes”, “primitive”, “native” with regards to Indigenous Australians (for a more comprehensive list please see UNSW’s guidelines [here](#)).

- When referring to the European colonisation in Australia the terms “discovery” or “settlement” should be avoided in favour of “colonisation”, “occupation” or “invasion”. For more information on this, please see UNSW’s guidelines [here](#).
- It is important to remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reflect a multiplicity of cultures and languages comprising tens of thousands of years of history and cannot be relegated to a monoculture.
- If you are speaking about Indigenous land, languages or places seek out the correct pronunciation. This is a helpful resource on [Aboriginal Language](#).

III. Disability

UNSW has a Disability Inclusion Action Plan which you can read [here](#). UNSW also offers Disability Confidence Training through the Australian Network on Disability; for more information, contact Workplace Diversity at workplace.diversity@unsw.edu.au. You are now able to book into Disability Confidence Training through the [UNSW Staff Learning Portal](#).

➤ **Inclusion**

- The purpose of this advice is to support academic staff in meeting their obligations under The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (the Standards) ensure students with disability the same rights as other students, including the right to education and training ‘on the same basis’ as students without disability.
- Academic staff should highlight to students during the introductory class the role of the Equitable Learning Services Team at UNSW. Students with disability can register with ELS and may be offered reasonable adjustments throughout their study. Students who are carers (e.g. of young children, elderly parents, siblings with disabilities) may also be able to register with ELS even if they or their dependant does not have a disability. Contact details here: <https://student.unsw.edu.au/disability-contacts>
- Students may experience a range of disabilities and health conditions. These disabilities or health conditions may be visible or invisible, permanent or temporary, chronic or episodic.
- Disabilities include; physical, intellectual, psychological, psychiatric, sensory, neurological, medical conditions, learning disabilities and carer responsibilities. It is important to recognise that living with disability does not negate a student’s agency.

- Students who have physical accessibility requirements should already be timetabled into accessible rooms (via a central process). If a student alerts you that they are unable to access your classroom or the accessible entrance, require other adjustments such as a hearing loop that are not available in your teaching space, please email/call both estate management and the Equitable Learning Services Team.
- If a temporary issue emerges (for instance if an accessible entrance is inaccessible due to building works) follow the same process.
- If you are hosting your class in a different room or going off-site for a class, ensure that you verify if any students have accessibility requirements by contacting ELS.
- Please note that when using a microphone many students with disability rely on the amplification of your voice as well as recordings. Ensure that you speak into the microphone slowly and clearly, reducing background noise.
- Ensure that your digital content is accessible refer to Appendix C that outlines UNSW's digital accessibility guidelines

➤ **Language**

- Use Person First language when referring to individuals with disabilities. Person First language puts the person first, and the impairment second. For instance, instead of “disabled person,” use “person with disability.” More information on Person First language can be found [here](#).
- Use “accessible toilet” instead of “disabled toilet”.
- Avoid referring to individuals with disability as “special” and individuals without disability as “normal”.
- In the case that a person with a disability is accompanied by an assistant, speak directly to the person (not the assistant).
- Avoid using language referring to mental health in colloquial phrases (e.g., “this weather is bipolar”, “my computer was being schizophrenic”). These types of expressions undermine inclusivity of people with lived experience of mental illness.

IV. Caring Responsibilities

It's important to recognise that students may have caring responsibilities of children, siblings, elderly parents or other dependants which may impact on their educational experience.

At the introductory lecture for the term, highlight that students who have caring responsibilities may be able register with ELS for reasonable educational adjustments.

When possible, provide the opportunity for students with caring responsibilities to access recorded lectures.

➤ **Breastfeeding**

UNSW is a breastfeeding friendly accredited workplace.

In Australia, breastfeeding parents have the right (under law) to breastfeed anywhere.

At UNSW, breastfeeding parents may also choose to access one of the following parents' rooms:

- Upper campus - Morven Brown parents' room, G51 ([Map Ref C20](#)) & Biological Sciences parent's room, G003, Ground Floor ([Map Ref E26](#))
- Middle campus - Room 1Q09, Level 1, Ainsworth Building ([Map Ref J17](#))
- Lower campus - Basement, Room B40, Science and Engineering Building ([Map Ref E8](#))

To arrange access to these rooms, individuals should contact Workplace Diversity - phone 9385 8354/9385 2732, or email workplace.diversity@unsw.edu.au. Individuals will be asked to provide their staff/student zID. **Note:** visitors can request a temporary access pass.

These rooms have restricted access to ensure privacy and security. Each room contains a comfortable chair, access to a refrigerator, a power outlet, hand washing facilities and a breast pump storage area.

APPENDICES

[Appendix A: Glossary](#)

[Appendix B: Indigenous STEM](#)

[Appendix C: Digital Accessibility](#)

[Appendix D: Additional Resources](#)

REFERENCES

- Diversity Council Australia, 2019, <https://www.dca.org.au/di-planning/getting-started-di/diversity-inclusion-explained>
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pederson, A., & Allen, W. (1999). Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 26(8).
- Kaplan, M. & Miller, A. T. (Eds.). (2007). Special Issue: Scholarship of multicultural teaching and learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, Issue 111.
- Smith, D. (2015). *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins Press.
- U.S Department of Education (2016). *Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/advancing-diversity-inclusion.pdf>

Questions? Contact us at Science.EDI@unsw.edu.au!