# A quick guide to inclusive language and accessible content in Griffith University policy documents

The purpose of this document is to provide a quick Guide to staff drafting Griffith policies and procedures. Griffith is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion and requires that this be reflected in our policy documents.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

When making reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within policy documents, the following examples are considered acceptable:

- ✓ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person/student/staff member

- ✓ Indigenous Australian person/student/staff member

- ✓ Australian First Nations people/students/staff

- ✓ Torres Strait Islander people/students/staff

Do not use:

- ✗ the abbreviations ATSI and A&TSI

- ✗ Aboriginal or Aboriginals as a noun

- ✗ lower case when using the words 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous Australian'

## Gender Diversity & LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

Griffith recognises that the diversity of genders goes beyond the binary of female/woman and male/man. To ensure inclusive language, we therefore use 'they' instead of 'he/she' in policy documents.

For example,

- ✗ Instead of: An appointee is required to disclose whether he/she…

- ✓ Use: An appointee is required to disclose whether they…

There will be opportunities to include gender-neutral language, for example, using 'people', 'staff', 'managers' or 'students' rather than 'women and men'. However, there may also be instances where it is appropriate to specify gender, for example, 'The University's Women in Leadership program'.

All Griffith policies and procedures are inclusive of staff and students who are people of diverse genders, bodies and sexualities and their families (where relevant), which is why using gender-neutral language where possible and relevant is important. For example, when discussing parental leave, using 'birth parent' instead of 'mother'.

As our understanding of identities grows and evolves, so does our language. The Griffith Pride Committee has recently recommended the terminology, people of 'diverse genders, bodies and sexualities' (which can be shortened to the acronym, DGBS) to be used in addition to the more commonly known acronym of 'LGBTQIA+' (meaning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and + to connote identities not listed).

While DGBS is more encompassing and inclusive of a range of diverse identities, LGBTQIA+ is more familiar and can also be used. If you need to refer to the rainbow communities in your policies or procedures, the new terminology can be used in the following ways:

- ✓ People of diverse genders, bodies and sexualities

- ✓ Staff who are of diverse gender, body and/or sexuality

- ✓ DGBS staff and students

Do not:

- ✗ Refer to the communities as 'gay people' or 'gay communities', as the DGBS communities encompass far more than people who are gay.

- ✗ Refer to sexualities or gender identities as 'preferences' or 'lifestyles'.

For more information on inclusive language and common terminology when it comes to the DGBS communities, please refer to our How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally and How to be a Trans Ally guides, both of which can be found on our Griffith Allies website.


## Person-Centred Language

At Griffith we use person-centred language, that is, putting the person first. For example,

- ✗ Instead of: disabled person/student/staff member

- ✓ Use: person/student/staff member with disability

We also recognise neurodiversity and that some neurodiverse people may not identify as being a person with disability. As such, you may wish to separate this out. For example,

- ✓ Person/student/staff member with disability and/or neurodiversity

# Accessible Content

## Meaningful links

Ambiguous links can be frustrating for people who are blind or have low vision and rely on screen reader software to access content.

- ✖ Generally, hyperlinked web links that are labelled with the following 'click here', 'read more', 'further information', etc. are unhelpful for people with screen readers.

- ✓ Instead, use words that describe the link. For example, Staff equity, diversity and inclusion website.

## Providing image descriptions/alternative text

There may be instances where there are images, for example, flow charts or infographics in policy documents. It is important that images have accompanying alternative text (descriptive text which conveys the meaning and context of a visual item) so that descriptions may be read aloud by screen reader software. Without alternative text, some users will miss important information.

For more information on how to write and embed alternative text, go to Microsoft's Everything you need to know to write effective alternative text website and/or use the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word, which can be found in the Review tab.

The image below has the following alternative text, 'Griffith University Pride Logo. The logo has a graphic depicting an open book to the left with pages that are coloured in the Progress Pride Flag colours of white, pink, baby blue, black, brown, red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple. The text to the right of the book states: Griffith University.' This was done by right clicking the image and choosing, 'Edit Alt Text'.



## Further information on accessible and inclusive content

The Australian Government also provides helpful guidance on Accessible and inclusive content including guidance on accessibility principles and inclusive design, and best practise for using plain English, abbreviations and acronyms for ease of reading.

**Forms**

Sometimes forms are linked to Griffith policies and procedures. As a general principle, and aligned with our Privacy Policy, it is important that we only collect information that is needed and avoid collecting irrelevant and potentially discriminatory information.

## Inclusive Categories

Where we do legitimately collect information, it is important that we use inclusive categories or free text fields. **Gender categories** should go beyond the binary of female/woman and male/man and include the opportunity for a person to indicate gender diverse identities such as non-binary, or self-describe (for example, providing a 'I use a different term (please specify)' option with a free text field). **Name categories** should recognise a diversity of naming norms, for example, different cultures have different concepts of what a 'first' and 'last' name is, and some people will not have two-part names. Additionally, some people may use a name that is different from their legal name.

Better practice may be:

1. Asking for a person's full name in one field with a note clarifying that chosen names are accepted, or

2. If a person's legal name is required for the purposes of the form, asking for a person's full name in one field in addition to a chosen name in another field.

**Consultation**

It is vital that where policy documents are about or impact particular groups, that these groups are involved in the development and consultation – 'nothing about us without us'.

If you'd like to discuss inclusive language and accessible content, please be in contact with the Senior Lead (Inclusion and Development) in Human Resources.