



EDU

A DEGREE
SMARTER.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** EDU is committed to active engagement with diversity in its own curriculum, as well as through intellectual, social, and cultural interactions. It recognises that institutional excellence can only be achieved by engaging with diversity at every level of institutional activities.
- 1.2** This commitment extends to the use of language and audio/visual material. The policy promotes diversity and equality by acknowledging and respecting contrasts among individuals and groups and assuring everyone has equal access to opportunities, services, and resources, regardless of their background or characteristics. Those who form part of EDU need to avoid using language that is insensitive to cultural differences or offends any group on the basis of gender, disability, age, body shape, ethnicity and race, religion or belief and gender identity or sexual orientation.

2. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- 2.1** Inclusive language is respectful of diversity. It helps promote the acceptance and value of individuals coming from different backgrounds or with different physical forms. This language needs to be free from words, phrases or tones that demean, insult, trivialise, stereotype or infantilise people either because they have a particular attribute or because they are members of a particular social group.
- 2.2** Inclusive language is about communicating in a way that respects a person's dignity and in a manner which empowers people who are wrongly perceived as subordinate or are considered as minorities by the rest of society.
- 2.3** The meaning and connotations of words should be used to create a more inclusive and empowering society.
- 2.4** Research shows that language has a profound impact on behaviour and can be used to include, value and empower people. The opposite is also true if it is used abusively. EDU values inclusive language because this encourages diversity. As an institution, EDU aims at ensuring that people are seen as people and not as stereotypes, attributes or characteristics.
- 2.5** Language is reflective of community values, knowledge and personal experiences. It should therefore be a positive expression of diversity.
- 2.6** The principles of inclusive language include:
 - a. the acceptance of diversity within and between groups;
 - b. ensuring that the focus is on people-centric language as opposed to associations with a group or culture;
 - c. ensuring that personal attributes or characteristics are only mentioned when these are relevant to the context in which they are used;
 - d. emphasis on a strengths-based approach that focuses on the resilience of individuals, their abilities, knowledge and capacities, rather than their shortcomings;

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- e. respecting the linguistic terms individuals prefer without making assumptions;
- f. being conscious of the implications of language and how it can denigrate people;
- g. encouraging people to speak on their own behalf or of the group they represent;
- h. challenging people who are trying to promote assumptions, myths and stereotypes;
- i. ensuring that the language used is inclusive and accessible to a diverse audience;
- j. being careful of the context to avoid situations where ambiguity can lead to offence.

2.7 At EDU, everyone shares in the responsibility for promoting and appreciating diversity in the workplace. It must be ensured that communications are not perceived as discriminatory, sexist, racist, homophobic or offensive. Some specific ways to implement inclusive language in educational and workplace settings are:

- a. ensuring that educational and professional development materials (e.g. images, case studies and examples used during lectures or professional development settings) reflect social diversity;
- b. using “*sic*” when the cited material uses language which is not inclusive;
- c. using examples in lectures or professional development workshops that include more than one area of diversity;
- d. ensuring that lecture slides, websites and scheduling of meetings are accessible to a diverse audience;
- e. keeping up to date with cultural differences to ensure that communications are not offensive;
- f. removing stereotypes or inappropriate language conversations;
- g. using a positive educative approach when faced by inappropriate language.

3. DISABILITY

3.1 People with disabilities are often described as victims, as helpless people to be pitied and cared for, therefore as vulnerable. The emphasis is on the disability rather than the person. The word “disabled” is a description not a group of people. When referring to the collective, one should use “disabled people” or “persons with disability” as opposed to “the disabled” as this and similar terms help depersonalise people and equate them with the disability. One should also use language that respects disabled people as active individuals with control over their own lives.

3.2 Medical labels should be avoided at all times. This is of particular relevance at EDU as both staff and students should strive, as much as possible, to disassociate people with their physical infirmity.

3.3 Phrases like “suffers from” should be avoided as they suggest discomfort, constant pain and a sense of vulnerability and hopelessness.

3.4 Deaf people whose first language is an acknowledged sign language consider themselves as part of “the deaf community” and they describe themselves as “Deaf”, with a capital D, to emphasise their deaf identity.

3.5 Wheelchair users do not see themselves as “confined to” a wheelchair or wheelchair bound. A wheelchair is a mobility aid and they should be referred to specifically as wheelchair users.

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- 3.6** Distinctions should be made between the positive and negative use of language. It is considered acceptable for wheelchair users to “go for walks” or visually impaired people to be “pleased to see” their friends. These expressions emphasise the inclusivity of the individual. Conversely, common phrases associated with impairments like “being blind drunk” or “deaf to any pleas” should be avoided.
- 3.7** People with a disability tend to be referred to collectively as the disabled, the handicapped, the mentally retarded, the blind, the deaf, or paraplegics, spastics, epileptics, the autistic, etc. These terms help depersonalise people and equate them with the disability. Use of language that respects disabled people as active individuals with control over their own lives should be encouraged.
- 3.8** People with disabilities are often stereotyped and portrayed as helpless, mindless, suffering, asexual beings. As victims they are portrayed as in need of the charity and sympathy of the non-disabled further promoting the discriminatory treatment of people with disabilities. To hedge against this, EDU would prefer that:
- people with disabilities should be portrayed in a positive manner as individuals with a variety of qualities;
 - people with disabilities are not pitied, feared or ignored, or are somehow more heroic, courageous, patient or “special” than others;
 - the terms “victim” or “sufferer” referring to a person who has or has had an illness, disease or disability are avoided.
- 3.9** Disability must be distinguished from impairment. Disability refers to the restriction of ability resulting from an impairment while impairment indicates any loss or dysfunction of psychological, physiological or anatomical function. When speaking to persons with disability one should:
- use a normal and unpatronizing tone of voice;
 - not be too politically correct or unreasonably sensitive;
 - address disabled people in the same way as other people;
 - speak directly to a disabled person, even if they have an interpreter or are accompanied.
- 3.10** Discriminatory “jokes” about people with disabilities are offensive and should be avoided.
- 3.11** EDU staff are encouraged to ensure that people with disabilities are represented in case materials and illustrations. Their inclusion should occur in illustrations unrelated to the topic of their disability although it is understood that, in the context of medical education, reference to disabilities may be unavoidable.

4. GENDER

- 4.1** EDU endorses language that does not differentiate between genders. Moreover, it seeks inclusivity of all those gender categories that are not comfortable with being classified as men or women in the traditional heterosexual sense. It is unfortunate that women and other groups are often rendered invisible in language. This occurs when masculine pronouns like “he”, “him”, and “his” are used to refer to all genders. The pronouns “they”, “them”, “theirs” can be used instead.
- 4.2** The structure of a statement together with the phraseology used should not be such as to belittle

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women relative to men making them appear as less competent. Language should also not be used to trivialise women and their activities, actions or occupations. Expressions such as “just a housewife” are a typical example. It intimates that the role of housewife acting as a critical and pivotal support for the family unit is an inferior calling for a woman and something that necessarily indicates inferior competences in other spheres.

- 4.3** EDU also discourages the less frequent but equally distasteful practice when men are the victims of stereotyping as when they are portrayed as uncaring and immature individuals.
- 4.4** In languages like English, where there are no singular gender indefinite pronouns, “he”, “him” and “his” should, if possible, be avoided by restructuring the statement to dispense with the pronoun or by using the plural form which is common to both men and women. When the traditional title includes the word “man” every effort should be made to replace it with “person”.
- 4.5** Generic terms such as doctor, technician, academic and administrator apply equally to all genders. Expressions such as “male secretary”, “female director”, “woman lecturer” should be avoided in contexts where the reference to a person’s gender is irrelevant. If gender specification is needed, the adjectives “female” and “male” should be used before the non-gender specific noun.
- 4.6** Names, salutations and titles should not be used to create the impression that either gender is inferior to the other. It is ideal if a consistent system is used for all genders. Those who prefer to use their pre-marital name should have this preference respected. Similarly, the use of “Ms.” is preferable because it creates consistency with the use of “Mr.” which does not distinguish the marital status of the man. Nevertheless, there are married people who prefer to be identified as such and in such cases the use of “Mrs.” is advised.
- 4.7** In an institution of higher learning such as EDU, people’s qualifications must be accurately reflected in their title irrespective of their gender.
- 4.8** Offensive colloquialisms and unreasonable endearments must be avoided if one is to avoid being accused of sexual harassment. People should always refer to each other using their family name prefixed by the preferred salutation unless it is manifestly obvious that the person in question wants to be addressed by the given name.
- 4.9** Sexist 'jokes' are offensive to many people and should be avoided.
- 4.10** Case studies and visual materials should include a representative sample of all genders to ensure that they are fairly represented in a variety of roles.
- 4.11** In the academic context, when sources which are adjudged to be sexist need to be quoted, “*sic*” should be used.

5. SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

- 5.1** The acceptance and respect for the lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, questioning and

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intersex (LGBTQI) population needs to be given prominence. There is an unfortunate tendency to think of and portray homosexual males as less masculine or more feminine than heterosexual males, and lesbians as more masculine or less feminine than heterosexual females. Individuals who describe themselves as bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning are arguably victims of even more disparaging views.

- 5.2** When more LGBTQI people are included in written content or examples used in classes, this means that they are actually perceived on an equal footing by society as opposed to being rendered unseen or invisible.
- 5.3** It is also important to showcase the diversity within this social category to ensure that the way these groups are referred to does not risk reinforcing stereotypes about this or any other minority group, especially if only minimal variations of that group are portrayed.
- 5.4** Where sex and/or gender information is collected and recorded in a personal record or research tool, individuals should be given the option to select or indicate a gender beyond the M/F binary.
- 5.5** Homophobic and transphobic humour must be avoided at all costs.
- 5.6** In the delivery of lectures at EDU care should be taken when selecting examples, case studies and visual material and/or when using illustrations, to include representations of all genders and ensure that they are represented in a variety of roles.
- 5.7** When quoting sources that use language that can be considered disparaging to our LGBTQI colleagues, "*sic*" should be used.

6. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY

- 6.1** As it grows as an institution of higher learning, EDU is increasingly likely to have a number of students and employees from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Language plays a major role in denoting how different ethnic and racial groups regard each other, and the hierarchical order that exists within a given social context. Ethnic and racial labels, names and expressions that are used to portray certain groups as inferior or superior to others must be avoided.
- 6.2** People may differ from each other on the basis of origin, descent, language, culture, religion and other characteristics. This diversity should be embraced by using non-discriminatory language in relation to race and ethnicity.
- 6.3** One should not refer to the ethnic or racial background of a person or group unless there is a valid reason for so doing.
- 6.4** There is a tendency for stereotyping people of different nationalities or having different characteristics. This also applies in the positive sense because they are considered to take away a person's individuality.
- 6.5** When it is important to specify the descent or ethnicity of a person or a group, or to distinguish between people born in different countries or cultures, this must be done in a way that does not cancel the person's individuality and must not be interpreted that the person in question is to be necessarily associated with others of the same or similar ethnic group or culture.
- 6.6** Racist "jokes" are offensive and should be avoided at all costs.

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- 6.7** Visual and textual illustrations of racial and ethnic minorities are important to counteract any perception that EDU is a homogenous educational institution. This should also counteract the invisibility of ethnic and racial minorities. It is recommended that EDU’s racial and ethnic diversity be reflected in both visual and textual illustrations, as long as stereotypical language and images are not.
- 6.8** When quoting from sources that use racist language, “*sic*” must be used after the alleged racist word or phrase. This calls attention to the fact that this form of wording is being quoted in the original.

7. RELIGION

- 7.1** At EDU, we promote an inclusive environment where everyone can feel valued, respected and treated equally regardless of their religious beliefs. Our commitment to equality and diversity in religion is essential to our core values. We aim to ensure everyone interacting with our organization feels included.
- 7.2** EDU is committed to promoting equality and diversity in religion and will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on an individual's religious beliefs or practices. We recognize and respect the variety of religious beliefs and practices. All EDU team members will work towards accommodating the needs of individuals based on their religious beliefs where possible.
- 7.3** We believe that by embracing religious diversity, we create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals who interact with our organization.

8. AGE AND SOCIAL CLASS

- 8.1** Although ageism, classism and sizeism are less common forms of offence, they are still prevalent and need to be avoided.
- 8.2** The term "ageism" refers to a constructed way of thinking about older persons in a negative way. This involves negative attitudes and stereotypes about ageing and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young, thereby neglecting to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons. Age discrimination is not taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination but has economic, social and psychological effects like other forms of discrimination.
- 8.3** Classism is the cultural, institutional and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign value to people on the basis of their education, income and/or occupation. There is a tendency to perceive people as coming from a certain social class background just because they were raised or happen to reside in particular areas. These practices and beliefs lead to differential treatment and can also affect students hailing from low socioeconomic backgrounds who find it harder to achieve higher levels of education.
- 8.4** Sizeism or size discrimination is discrimination based on a person's size. It refers to extremes in physical size, such as very tall or short or extremely thin or corpulent. As in the case of other forms of discrimination, sizeism is not always explicit. Sizeist stereotypes and attitudes support the ideas like, for instance, that over-weight people are lazy, or that they eat too much and do not exercise

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enough.

- 8.5** Power-based interpersonal violence is a term used to refer to interpersonal violence, sexual assault, harassment, stalking and threats, abusive relationships and bullying, child abuse and human trafficking. When referring to those who have been affected by power-based interpersonal violence, it is suggested that instead of using the word “victim”, the phrase “person who has experienced power-based interpersonal violence” be used instead.
- 8.6** Ageist, sizeist and classist humour is considered offensive and unrefined and should be avoided.
- 8.7** EDU academic staff should take care when selecting examples, case studies and visual material and/or when using illustrations, to include representations of all types, forms and age and ensure that they are represented in a variety of roles.
- 8.8** When it is necessary to quote from sources that use ageist, sexist or classist language “*sic*” should be used.

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