

Guidelines for Inclusive Language and for the Use of Language of God

1. Purpose

The ACD is aware that language shapes and informs our understanding of reality and our understanding of ourselves. Therefore general use of language and the use of language for God are matters of importance for ACD faculty, staff and students.

2. Scope

These Guidelines apply to students formally enrolled in ACD courses and units of study. The ACD Board has delegated to staff of ACD constituent member colleges and ACD associated colleges responsibility for implementation of these Guidelines.

3. Guidelines

3.1. General Guidelines

3.1.2 In using language we must take care and remember to:

- Use language that is culturally appropriate and respectful of the diversity of people
- Use Respectful language that avoids language that stereotypes, labels or emphasises difference, for example unnecessarily mentioning a person's race, gender, age or ethnic/cultural background, or generalising a group on the basis of perceived common characteristics such as physique or culture.

3.1.3 General guidelines for inclusive language can be accessed at the following website:

<https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/format-writing-and-structure/inclusive-language>

3.2 Guidelines for the Use of Language for God

3.2.1 The ACD recognizes that most Western European languages are androcentric and products of the widespread patriarchal culture out of which they emerged.

3.2.2 Our language for God, used in theology and worship, is the human means whereby the believing community expresses its understanding of God. Theological language can never adequately express the mystery and wonder of the living God.

3.2.3 God-language is always shaped and formed by a particular cultural context. For both Jewish and Christian faiths these contexts have been patriarchal. Hence the language used for God has been cast in predominantly male terms.

3.2.4 The result of this particular dimension of our Judeo-Christian cultural heritage has been to limit our imaging and understandings of God and our understandings of ourselves as human beings. Within our Churches language with regard to God that is gender-exclusive continues both to limit who God can be for us and to limit who we can become as human partners in God's mission.

- 3.2.5 If we are to be faithful to the mystery and the transcendence of God, to the sheer abundance of God, then we need to draw more fully on the wealth of biblical images, including female and male images, as well as drawing on fresh images and names from our own age.
- 3.2.6 As teachers and students who are ministers of the good news and aware that different images of God will speak to people at different stages of their lives, we are in a position to model a rich use of language for God.
- are encouraged to draw from the richness of biblical images in their use of God language;
 - acknowledge and address the androcentric emphasis within the Judeo-Christian heritage that limits our understandings of God and humanity.
- 3.2.7 Students are encouraged to use a variety of names and images for God that include female, male and non-gender specific images in their papers and tutorials and teachers are encouraged to model in their classes how this might be done.

The scriptures themselves witness to attempts to transcend the limitations of gender-exclusive concepts and imagery for God. For example, Genesis 1:26-28 makes it clear that female as well as male is made in God's image. Other examples of female images for God include: Is. 42:14-16, Is. 46:3, Is. 66:13, Luke 13:34, Luke 15:8-10. Other biblical examples are - Father/Mother, Creator, Maker, Sustainer, Nurturer, Loving Parent, Source of Life, Sovereign, Ruler, Saviour, Redeemer, Liberator, Companion, Friend, Advocate, Everloving God, Gracious God.

The practice of constantly using only male pronouns can be overcome in various ways:

- Repeat the word God, eg God created the world and on the seventh day God rested.
- Address God in the second person, as "you", rather than "he" or "she".
- Use "he" and "she" interchangeably.
- Leave out the pronoun, eg "God created the world and then rested", not "then he rested".

4. Legislation/Standards

- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (South Australia)
- Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Commonwealth)
- Higher Education Standards Framework
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- Racial Vilification Act 1996 (South Australia)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- Higher Education Support Act 2003 and Higher Education Provider Guidelines
- Commonwealth Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

5. Related Policies and Procedures

- Assessment Regulations
- Grievance Procedure
- Assignment Guidelines

6. Authorities

Approval Authority	Academic Board
Responsible Officer	Executive Officer
Minor Amendment Date	August 2021
Review Date	Default is 3 years after approval date
Replaces Policy (if applicable)	