



McGill Physical Therapy

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism in Learning (PT IDEAL)

Recommendations for

Gender Identity and Pronouns – Program Etiquette

Recommendation 1

Individuals should be addressed using the name and pronouns of their choosing.

Recommendation 2

No one should be expected or required to state or otherwise display their gender or pronouns.

Recommendation 3

When addressing a group, use gender neutral terms.

Recommendation 4

Be an advocate while still respecting everyone's individual autonomy.



Additional Details for Recommendations

At its core, our society's current discussion around gender identity and pronoun use is about treating others with dignity, more than it is about opinions, values, and beliefs. Some individuals may wish to make their gender identity and pronouns known, so that they can be addressed and referred to appropriately. For others, gender identity may be a personal issue that they do not want to (or feel ready to) express publicly. Each of these positions, and everything in between, is equally valid. No one should be shamed or belittled for expressing their gender identity or pronouns, just as no one should be expected to do so.

We encourage instructors and students in the PT program to read about gender and pronoun use and the importance of addressing and referring to people in the manner that they choose. Resources are provided at the end of this document.

The PT IDEAL committee recommends the following for the classroom and other non-clinical interactions:

Recommendation 1

Individuals should be addressed using the name and pronouns of their choosing.

Everyone at McGill has the right to freedom of expression, but we also have the responsibility to ensure the dignity of others. As such, if an individual wants to be addressed using a specific name or pronouns, then everyone else should try to do so.

If you mistakenly address someone with the wrong name, or refer to them using the wrong pronouns, apologize, correct yourself, and try to remember what name and pronouns to use for that person in the future.

Recommendation 2

No one should be expected or required to state or otherwise display their gender or pronouns.

How an individual chooses to express their identity is a personal choice. McGill's policy on [Personal Rights and Responsibilities](#) includes the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the right to the safeguard of one's dignity. As such, no one has the right to decide how others should express their gender identity.

It should be noted, however, that while no one is expected or required to state their pronouns, everyone is free to do so. For course instructors who wish to include their pronouns when introducing themselves to a class and/or would like some guidance on how to welcome students to express how they would like to be addressed, some examples are provided later in this document.



Recommendation 3

When addressing a group, use gender neutral terms.

This recommendation is based on the reasonable chance that, within a large group, one or more individuals will not identify with traditional gender norms. According to the results of the 2019 Census Test, the estimated percentage of the transgender population in Canada, including non-binary individuals, is 0.35% (Martel et al., 2020), with similar numbers in the United States (World Population Review, 2022) and elsewhere (Spizzirri, 2021). More importantly, using gender neutral terms requires little effort for a potentially positive effect. From example, one might address a group by saying “hello everyone” rather than “hello ladies and gentlemen.”

Recommendation 4

Be an advocate while still respecting everyone's individual autonomy.

Advocacy is one of the core competencies in physiotherapy. This includes advocating for yourself and for others but does not extend to impeding individual autonomy.

Based on this:

If someone addresses you with the wrong name, or refers to you with the wrong pronouns, you should feel comfortable pointing out their error and you should not expect any negative response or repercussions for doing so (see recommendation 1). Remember, however, that you also have a responsibility to be polite and tactful when advocating for yourself.

If you believe that someone else has been addressed with the wrong name, or referred to with the wrong pronouns, and that person does not correct the error themselves, please confer with them before addressing the issue. While everyone’s dignity should be protected, it is up to the individual to decide what is right for them.

Background and Rationale

Within McGill’s policy on [Personal Rights and Responsibilities](#) are the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the right to safeguard one’s dignity. As such, everyone within the McGill community has the right to their own opinion, and the right to express that opinion. No one, however, has the right to attack another individual’s identity or dignity. Rather, everyone has the responsibility to ensure the dignity of others.

It is essential that all members of the PT program treat each other with dignity, including showing respect for different opinions, values, and beliefs. This is central to the idea of cultural competency. We have a duty to try to understand the opinions, values, and beliefs of others, even if we choose not to agree with those opinions or to adopt those values and beliefs as our own.



Specific to the issue of gender identity and pronouns:

- 1) Everyone has the right to express their gender identity, including how they wish to be addressed (e.g., name, pronouns, etc.)
- 2) Everyone has the responsibility to treat others with dignity, regardless of how they choose to express their gender identity.
- 3) No one has the right to decide how others should express their gender identity (including requiring others to state their pronouns).

We must also remember that, for many people, adjusting how they use pronouns will require undoing decades of culturally engrained unconscious behaviours. If someone makes a mistake, we have a responsibility to be tactful and polite when addressing that mistake. People are more likely to want to listen and to respond with respect if you treat them like a partner rather than an adversary.

“Whatever anybody says or does, assume positive intent. You will be amazed at how your whole approach to a person or problem becomes different.”

– Indra Nooyi (past chairperson and CEO of PepsiCo)

Example of a personalized introduction for course instructors:

Example 1

Hello everyone. My name is Richard Preuss. My last name rhymes with ‘voice.’ The ‘eu’ is pronounced like the ‘eu’ in Freud. You can call me Mr. Preuss or Dr. Preuss. Once you graduate, feel free to call me Richard.

If you ever feel the need to talk about me when I’m not around, please use ‘he’ and ‘him’ pronouns. I’m not telling you this because I think that I have to or because I expect you to tell me your pronouns. That is entirely up to you. I’m telling you this because I want you to know that you can tell me your pronouns and that I will address you the way that you want to be addressed.

Example 2

Hello everyone. My name is Dr. Preuss. If you are having trouble pronouncing my last name, it rhymes with ‘voice.’

I have all of your names in my class list, but if you have a preferred way of being addressed, whether you use a different name or specific pronouns, please feel free to let me know and I will make every effort to remember. I would also ask, however, that you be forgiving if I make a mistake. I will never misname or misgender anyone intentionally, but I also do not have a perfect memory and may occasionally slip into ingrained habits without thinking.



References:

Martel, L., Ménard, F.-P., & Séguin, J.-P. (2020, July 20). *This document reports the work performed by Statistics Canada in order to propose the inclusion of a question on gender to the 2021 census, while keeping a question on sex at birth. the context in which this work was performed is presented, as well as the data needs, and results from the 2019 National Census Test. Sex at birth and gender: Technical report on changes for the 2021 Census.* Retrieved May 4, 2022, from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/98-20-0002/982000022020002-eng.cfm>

Spizzirri, G., Eufrásio, R., Lima, M.C.P. *et al.* Proportion of people identified as transgender and non-binary gender in Brazil. *Sci Rep* **11**, 2240 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-81411-4>

World Population Review (2022) What percentage of the population is transgender 2022. Retrieved May 4, 2022, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/transgender-population-by-state>

Resources:

Transgender, Two-Spirit, and Non-Binary Students – Resources for Instructors
https://www.mcgill.ca/equity/files/equity/supporting_trans_two-spirit_and_non-binary_students_resources_for_instructors_-_infographic-nov_12_2021.pdf

McGill Web Services - Gender-neutral language
<https://www.mcgill.ca/web-services/resources/digital-standards/make-sites-accessible-and-inclusive/gender-neutral-language>

The meaning of “Dignity”
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dignity/201304/what-is-the-real-meaning-dignity-0>