

**Language and Diversity.
Food for Thought from the
Faculty of Protestant Theology.**

I

The Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Bonn is home to many different people learning and working together. As well as acknowledging this as a fact, we also appreciate the diversity that we see on a daily basis: the realization that we are all equal but definitely not the same.

We facilitate and delight in encounters with people that become a diverse source of inspiration: people of all gender identities and queer lifestyles, people of different ages, people of color, people with a disability, people of different social backgrounds and different religions and cultures.

We reject all forms of discrimination and debasement of people based on their identity or lifestyle and are committed to ensuring that all people can live together in justice and free from prejudice. We see ourselves as part of an open and diverse society and are committed to strengthening and preserving it.

II

We appreciate the importance of communication and language and their impact, and we are not prepared to undermine this knowledge in our own use of language. We therefore set out to make our commitment to the success of an open and diverse society visible on a linguistic level as well.

Language and the realities that it describes are never fixed but always evolving. The following suggestions, which are intended to encourage you to think about them and pass them on, set out to shape this dynamic as a process within which the implicit diversities also become explicitly audible, readable and visible.

III

These suggestions are to be understood as guidance and recommendations in a dynamic process on the journey toward diversity-sensitive language in the Faculty.

1. Addressing students.

Students should be addressed using their preferred names and pronouns. Lecturers are to create the climate required for this on their courses and signal their approachability.

- A “Preferred form of address” column can be added to participant lists for courses held in person.
- Participants in Zoom meetings can add their preferred pronouns after their name to make communication easier (e.g. “Kim Müller, she/her”).

- A gender-neutral form of address or, for groups, inclusive wording (e.g. “Sehr geehrte Studierende/Teilnehmer*innen”) can be used in written communications.
- If lecturers should find different names (e.g. in e-Campus or BASIS) in a course context, they can ask the students to clarify. However, this must never be done in front of everybody during a course.

2. Term papers.

Term papers in the Faculty of Protestant Theology should be worded so as to express sensitivity to gender, age and diversity issues at all times. This continuous sensitivity cannot be signaled simply by adding a footnote or a generalizing remark about a “generic masculine.” Lecturers can give special praise to creative and successful ways of showing linguistic sensitivity.

3. Communication.

All members of the Faculty of Protestant Theology endeavor to use gender-, age- and diversity-sensitive language in both their internal and external communications.

- In this connection, all the Faculty’s regulations and bylaws are being revised linguistically and adapted in line with the requirements of diversity-sensitive language.
- In the same way, the Faculty’s homepage and all its social media channels are being checked for diversity-sensitive language and updated.
- Invitation posters, notices, flyers, etc. from the Faculty or its institutes and departments should reflect diversity-sensitive language.

Additional resources, tips on wording and observations on language in transformation:

- University of Bonn:

https://www.gleichstellung.uni-bonn.de/de/pdf-dokumente/faltblatt_sprache

- The Protestant Church in the Rhineland:

<https://www.ekir.de/gender/Downloads/Sie-ist-unser-bester-Mann-2020.pdf>

- “Geschickt gendern”:

<https://geschicktgendern.de>

- “Genderleicht”:

<https://www.genderleicht.de/schreibtipps/>

- Tips on writing correct German:

<https://www.rechtschreibrat.com/geschlechtergerechte-schreibung-empfehlungen-vom-26-03-2021/>

- The Duden editorial team:

<https://www.duden.de/sprachwissen/sprachratgeber/Geschlechtergerechter-Sprachgebrauch>