

# Using language and images at BOKU

**gender-  
sensitive**

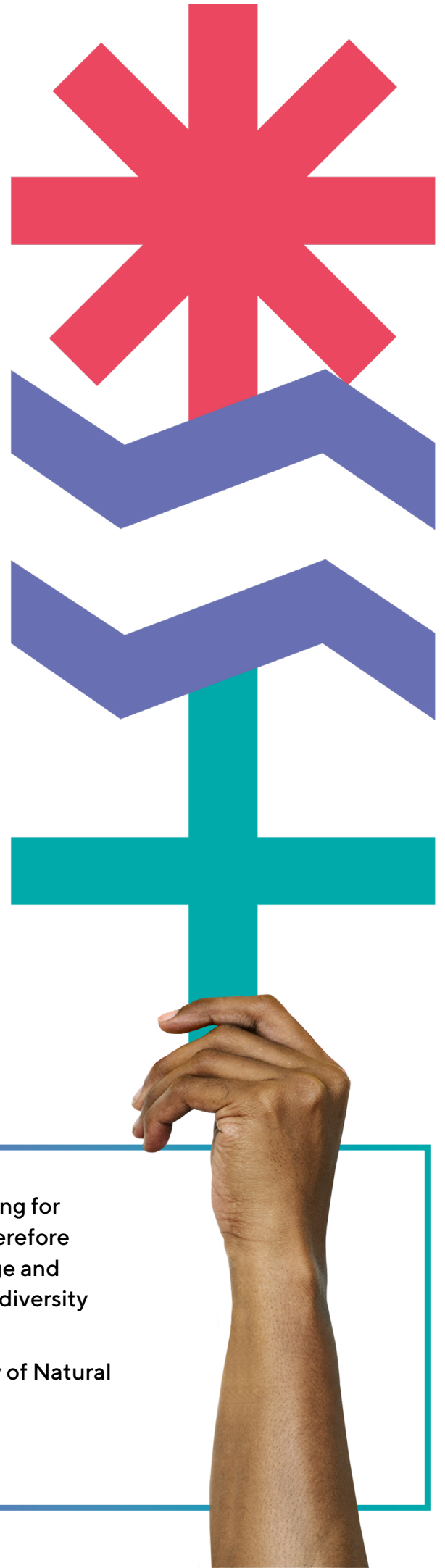
**diversity-  
aware**

**inclusive**



Changes in how we use language can prove challenging for many. With the recommendations present, BOKU therefore intends to provide orientation by focusing on language and images that are more inclusive, gender-sensitive and diversity aware.

A recommendation of the Rectorate of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna



# Gender-sensitive language use



A gender-sensitive approach recognizes the diversity of genders and opts for wordings and depictions that include as many people as possible.

Over the last years, the asterisk (in German: Genderstern) has been established at BOKU as a more gender-sensitive style. The asterisk expresses the diversity of genders. Using the asterisk in the professional title of Professor\*innen in German, for example, not only renders visible the masculine as well as the feminine form but also includes all other genders.

## Examples

Autor\*innen (authors), Bewerber\*innen (applicants), der\*die Wissenschaftler\*in (a researcher that is either male or female or whose gender is not represented in the common binary)

Not all persons identify with female or male gender attributions. Using gender neutral forms of address in personal communication and non-binary wording in written communication allows to also address humans outside of the binary spectrum of genders.

When personally communicating with persons you know identify as men or women, you can continue to use gender specific binary forms of address.

In German gender-neutral terms can help to simplify language as they are an alternative to gendered expressions. Their benefit: they do not refer to gender and thus do not perpetuate binary gender norms.

## Examples

Studierende (persons who study), Lehrende (persons who teach), Forschende (persons who do research), BOKU Angehörige (members of BOKU), Mitarbeitende (persons employed in an organization), Leitung (persons with executive responsibilities), Personal (personnel)

When addressing someone in written form – for example in individualized mass emailing – gender neutral or non-binary wording can be used.

## Examples

Guten Tag Vorname Nachname – Good Day First Name Last Name  
Sehr geehrte\*r Vorname Nachname – Esteemed First Name Last Name  
Liebe\*r Vorname (Nachname) – Dear First Name (Last Name)

## Examples of plural

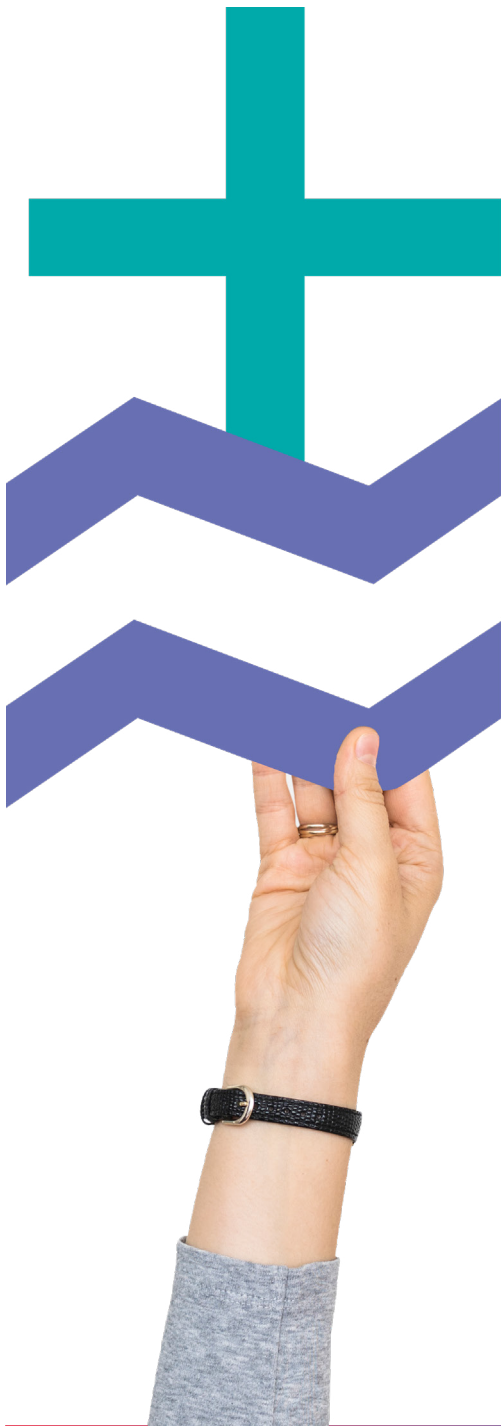
Sehr geehrte Lehrende / Studierende / Führungskräfte –  
Esteemed persons teaching / persons studying / persons with  
management responsibilities

Liebe Teammitglieder / Teilnehmende / Interessierte –  
Dear team members / attendees / persons interested

**AIM** In the Gender Equality Plan (available in German), BOKU endorses the use of gender-fair language free from discrimination and commits to the objective of encouraging language diversity.

**LANGUAGE IN FLUX** Language is – and has always been – in flux. It manifests and is itself a manifestation of societal developments and to a large degree represents the reality we find ourselves in.

# Diversity-aware and inclusive usage of language and images



Language and image use characterized by diversity-awareness and inclusivity allows for equitable visibility of all humans.

This involves addressing people in their diversity with the aim of reaching out to everyone without excluding, offending or discriminating anyone. Signifying in this way an equitable interaction of all people.

Language becomes (more) inclusive when it aims to put into focus, point out and render visible as many perspectives, different realities of life, groups of people and realms of experience as possible.

The following questions may prove helpful: Whom do I want to address? Who may feel excluded or not included?

## Example

When depicting families, for example, this implies that attention needs to be paid to the diverse concepts of how family life can be lived and to refrain from showing white nuclear families with a biological mother, a biological father and biological children.

## Reflective space

Which concepts of family life often remain unseen? Persons caring for other persons, single-parent households, family members with disabilities, BIPOC\* families, queer parenthood, ...

## Action

We can rethink and disrupt topic-specific representations, for example, by rendering People of Colour\*\* and people with disabilities visible as part of our every-day reality instead of exclusively using them to illustrate the topics of internationality or inclusion, respectively.

\* the abbreviation BIPOC denotes Black, Indigenous and People of Colour

\*\* People of Colour used in an analytical and political context describes the shared experiences of members of the African, Asian and Latin American diaspora

## eAccessibility and Accessibility

Furnishing images with alternative texts and videos with subtitles renders them more accessible.

Paying attention to the reduction of barriers when framing documents renders them more accessible for people using assistive technologies.

## Info

Assistive technologies are technological devices that aid people with visual or similar impairments such as screen readers.

## Hilfestellung

[Creating accessible documents](#)  
(available in German)

**CHANGE** One of our concerns is to use language as non-violently, inclusive and diversity-aware as possible. When we practice awareness of speech and treat images consciously we actively contribute towards equitable gender relations, diversity and inclusion and thus actively shape an appreciative and positive university culture.

**LONG VERSION** The extensive recommendation on using language and images at BOKU containing further key aspects for framing moderations, phrasing job advertisements and using names, pronouns and titles is available on the website <https://short.boku.ac.at/sprachgebrauch>