



A Guide for Educators: Gender, Pronouns + FAQ

In our rapidly evolving world, it is essential for educators to stay informed about important issues related to gender and pronouns. This guide is designed to assist kaimahi in understanding gender and pronouns within the educational context. By cultivating an inclusive and respectful learning environment, we can empower all ākonga to thrive and reach their full potential.

1. What are gender pronouns?

Gender pronouns are linguistic tools used to refer to individuals. We use them every day and often without realising we are using them. Common gender pronouns include “he,” “she,” and “they” and some individuals prefer alternative pronouns like “ze,” “xe,” or “ey”. It’s important to recognize that gender is not binary and goes much further than just man and woman; and the practice of asking individuals what pronouns they use for themselves should be done in an effort to respect the diversity of gender identities that are found here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

2. Why is it important to respect gender pronouns?

Respecting gender pronouns is vital because it acknowledges an individual’s gender identity and fosters a supportive, inclusive environment. Using the correct pronouns demonstrates respect and empathy, affirming that everyone’s identity is valid, and that they are respected and supported for who they are.

3. How can I create an inclusive classroom environment?

To create an inclusive classroom, begin by introducing yourself with your pronouns, and encourage students to do the same. We encourage kaimahi at the beginning of the year to distribute a blank page where students can freely add their preferred names and pronouns. After class, we recommend kaimahi check whether their ākonga’s preferred names and pronouns match their student trackers to minimise misgender ākonga throughout the year.

Educate yourself on the topic of gender and pronouns and be prepared to address any concerns or questions from students. Avoid making assumptions about your students’ gender identities.

4. What should I do if I make a mistake with pronouns?

Mistakes can happen, but it’s essential to acknowledge and correct them. Apologize, use the correct pronoun, and move on. Avoid making a big deal out of it, as this can create more discomfort for all parties involved.





5. How can I support non-binary and transgender students?

Supporting non-binary and transgender students requires empathy and inclusivity. Offer options for students to share their pronouns and be proactive in respecting those pronouns. Use inclusive language in your teaching materials and provide resources on campus or online where students can access support and information.

6. What are some common gender-neutral pronouns?

Some common gender-neutral pronouns include “they/them,” “ze/hir,” and “ey/em.” Be open to learning about and using less common pronouns if your students request them, or maybe even defaulting to gender neutral pronouns unless you specifically know someone’s gender.

7. How do I address concerns about discussing gender and pronouns in class?

Engage with people that have concerns by emphasizing the importance of creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. Explain that these discussions are part of fostering empathy and respect and align with the school’s commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Inclusive and respectful education environments benefit all students, regardless of their gender identity. By understanding and embracing gender pronouns, educators can provide a safe and welcoming space for all students to learn and grow. Continue to educate yourself and be open to learning about gender diversity to ensure that your classroom is a place where all students feel seen, heard, and valued.

If you would like to learn more or have a conversation on this topic with one of our amazing Rainbow + Ally Network members don’t hesitate to get in touch, email us at - **ally@unitec.ac.nz**

Further information:

<https://genderminorities.com/glossary-transgender/>

<https://www.tengakaukahukura.nz/pronouns>

<https://genderminorities.com/resources/transgender-and-intersex-101/>

<https://pridepledge.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Pride-Pledge-Pronouns-Resource-Guide-PDF-2022.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU3Kn78JEwg>

