



# ECLASS Position Paper

Sensitive language  
and its use in the ECLASS Standard

June 2022

## Sensitive language and its use in the ECLASS Standard

Over the last years we are continuously witnessing a movement toward using a more sensitive and inclusive language. This matter is of high significance because of the power language can have in shaping minds, thoughts and the world we live in.

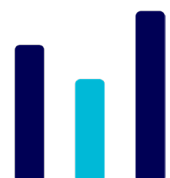
The ECLASS association acknowledges the use of insensitive terminology in standardization and is determined to use a more inclusive language that reflects our values and norms.

### Why is it important to use sensitive language?

- Nowadays, sensitive language is part of the right tone in professional communication. Choosing our words mindfully can make the difference between building a professional relationship or offending someone. It can reflect an openness towards differences, creating a safe, neutral space for everyone. Thus, it is of advantage to integrate this kind of vocabulary in our communication.
- Addressing insensitive language has gained significant importance. Many companies stated already acting toward a more inclusive and sensitive language.
- By using a more inclusive language, the ECLASS association gives people the feeling of representation and belonging, resulting in higher engagement. Failure to comply with the demand for change could in the future become an exclusion criterion for the use of the ECLASS Standard.

In the ECLASS Standard we have identified terminologies such as “whitelist / blacklist” or “master / slave” that are used to express the ideas of process and structure and which are not discriminatory by intent but are racially loaded and can be triggering. Correspondingly, the terms “male / female”, commonly used to describe connectors, indicate sexualization which on itself is problematic. For this reason, we propose the following list of terms to replace the current insensitive ones.

(Please note: This list only contains examples and does not claim to be complete.)



| Insensitive terms | Context of use   | Alternatives                   |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>whitelist</b>  | ➤ a list that allows everyone access   | ➤ allow list                   |
| <b>blacklist</b>  | ➤ a list that denies its members access  | ➤ deny/denied list, block list |
| <b>master</b>     | ➤ entity/device/ unit that has control over another  | ➤ leading, lead                |
|                   | ➤ determines the characteristics/ actions of another   | ➤ leading                      |
|                   | ➤ device in communication that has control over another or has highest priority                      | ➤ master, host                 |
| <b>slave</b>      | ➤ entity/device/unit that is controlled by another   | ➤ subordinate                  |
|                   | ➤ component that is dependent on the characteristics/ actions of another                             | ➤ following                    |
|                   | ➤ device in communication that is controlled by another device or has lower priority                 | ➤ device                       |
| <b>male</b>       | ➤ entity/device/unit used as the removable part of a detachable electrical connection                | ➤ plug, pin connector          |
|                   | ➤ a screw thread on the external surface of a cylinder used for mechanical connection                | ➤ external thread              |
| <b>female</b>     | ➤ entity/device/ unit used as the stationary part of a detachable electrical connection              | ➤ socket, jack, receptacle     |
|                   | ➤ a screw thread on the internal surface of a hollow cylinder that is used for mechanical connection | ➤ internal thread              |

**The challenge of integrating sensitive and inclusive language into the ECLASS Standard:**

One of the main goals of the ECLASS Standard is to support a "search and find" and a "standardized description" of products and services. Thus, the terminology typically used in classes, properties and values must reflect the one that is most common in the industry.

Experts would thus have to check whether the above-mentioned values can be renamed, and users still understand what is meant. The new terminology should be as common as the previous one. The challenge here is to choose a politically correct language while still achieving the main goal of the ECLASS Standard that is to be of use to the economy.

Such a project to replace insensitive language requires extensive support from the ECLASS expert groups.

