In the spirit of inclusion and accuracy, the MIT Chancellor’s Office (including the Division of Student Life and the Office of the Vice Chancellor) has adopted the use of non-gendered language in official documents and publications and across digital and other communications channels.

We understand that the transition (especially the use of newer terms) will be an ongoing one and that uniform use of these terms by the MIT community will take time. The short guidelines below provide additional context and information. Other offices at MIT are encouraged to adopt similar usage guidelines.

**Class Designations**

The term “first-year” should be used in lieu of freshman and freshmen.

Specific class designations of sophomore, junior, and senior should be used instead of upperclassman or upperclassmen. If referring to a mixed group of class years (not including first-years), upper-level undergraduates or upper-level students is preferred.

Since we are a community of both undergraduates and graduate students, clarifying first-year undergraduates vs. first-year graduate students is vital for accuracy and clarity. When referring to a combination of both groups, first-year students is appropriate.

**Hyphenation**

When used in a title or heading (e.g., Office of the First Year or First Year Advising), do not hyphenate, as it increases readability. In other cases…

***When used as an adjective:***

* Hyphenate when the adjective precedes the noun it modifies.
  + Example: *All first-year students are assigned an advisor.*
  + Example: *All first-year graduate students took advantage of enhanced orientation activities in August.*
* Do not hyphenate when the adjective follows its noun.
  + Example: *All of the students attending Orientation are first year.*
  + Example: *Career Advising and Professional Development led a welcome event intended for graduate students in their first year.*

***When used as a noun:***

* Hyphenate when informally referring to the class as “first-year” or “first-years” and the entire class group of “first-year students.”
  + Example a): *A MechE graduate student was awarded a major NIH grant even though she was a first-year.*
  + Example b): *Faculty, staff, and undergraduate first-years are actively collaborating to enhance the experiences of our undergraduates.*

**Capitalization**

* When used in a title or heading, capitalize each word (e.g. Office of the **F**irst **Y**ear).
* When not used in a title or heading, use sentence case and capitalize only the first part of the term if used to start a sentence.
  + Example: *First-year undergraduates attend a weeklong Orientation in late August.*
  + Example: *First-year graduate students will have many opportunities to take advantage of all the city of Boston has to offer.*

**Reference:** adapted from <https://yalecollege.yale.edu/first-year-upper-level-usage-guide>