Say My Name: The importance of names in building inclusive communities

Dr Jane Bryan

Key Values

Our names are often key to our identities

Hearing our names is powerful

Respectful interactions around names help us build community and connection

For some, misnaming can feed into a much wider pattern of discrimination and harassment.

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Key aims: understand experiences

Explore experience of staff and students when encountering names with which they are unfamiliar

Explore experience of staff and students with names many find unfamiliar

Key aims: find solutions

Co-create recommendations and guidelines to ease uncertainty over how to respect names

Identify technical tools that may help individuals/institutions

Research design

Online survey

Semi-structured interviews

Research: Summer 2021

840 staff and students completed online survey

9 semi-structured interviews with staff and students

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Key findings

Research findings: general

Almost half of the Warwick community (45%; n356) work or study alongside someone whose name they are unsure how to pronounce out loud.

Many students and staff (57%) reported experiencing routine mispronunciation of their names

Over 27% of respondents adapt their name or adopt a new name often to ease interactions

Many students and staff are uncertain how to respect names, but most want to be respectful and inclusive but lack of dialogue allows inclusive behaviours

Research findings: general

Many students and staff are confident to check pronunciation at first meeting but not later

Many students and staff find it difficult to correct those in authority

Hesitancy over introductions/pronunciations often impacts sense of belonging/visibility/communication

Names in the teaching space

Over 40% of staff and students reporting that they had avoided using a student's name where they were not sure how to pronounce it.

Names many find unfamiliar

Some students and staff experience others shortening their names or giving them new name

Some students and staff found others make assumptions about them because of their name

Many students and staff experience people commenting about their name

Adoption/adaption of names

Most students and staff who adapt their name or adopt a new name would prefer to use their given name

Students and staff who adapt their names or adopt new names find it hard to change

Some students and staff feel a disconnection from their family/heritage when using another name

Some staff and students can experience challenge from peers

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Misspelling of names

Most students and staff find misspelling of names less forgivable than mispronunciation

Lack of attention to spelling can have serious consequences (especially in official documents)

Common sentiment

Given [my name] is not difficult, I feel that repeated mis-speaking and mis-writing, particularly by long-term colleagues, would seem to reflect a lack of care or attention in terms of really knowing who I am.

Co-created recommendations

Co-created recommendations:
Institutional support

Some respondents felt that staff and students were left unsupported when trying to manage uncertainty over names.

"As the student body has become increasingly international and numbers have grown, it has remained an individualised responsibility for staff to approach these issues"

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Co-created recommendation 1:

Improve guidance on the importance of names in teaching and other interactions.

- Resources pack
- Resources library
- Short video

HOW TO RESPECT NAMES

Names are a key part of our identity, closely connecting us to our families and culture. By caring about getting someone's name right, we show respect for the individual behind the name.

1 If in doubt, ask

Pay attention to how someone says and spells their name and if in doubt, ask how they say their name and invite them to correct your pronunciation.

We won't always get names right but trying to do so shows we care about the person behind the name.

2 Trying matters

Avoid making a big deal about saying someone's name right. Check in advance and in private where you can and accept any correction with a simple 'thank you.'

3 Don't make a fuss

Names are part of someone's identity and so don't joke or comment about them or shorten or change them without invitation.

4 Treat names with respect

Names in emails: check twice

Use an audio name badge in your email signature so everyone can hear you say your name.

FIND OUT MORE

warwick.ac.uk/saymyname

Respecting names STARTS with you

Say My Name

Say someone's name to build connection and show respect for others

Try to get names and pronouns right: they are a key part of our identity

Ask if you are unsure how to pronounce a name – in private if possible, or use Google

Respect names: never shorten or change without invitation, never joke about them

Tech helps: use audio name badges and phonetic guides in email signatures and profiles

Spelling and pronouns: details matter – check twice

Find out how to create an audio name badge and phonetic guide, and more at warwick.ac.uk/saymyname

Co-created recommendation 2:

Phonetic pronunciation guides and audio name badges embedded as standard **in email signatures**

Guidance on creating inclusive signatures available here:
- Infographic
- Instructions

Four steps to an inclusive email signature and profile

It only takes a few moments to embed tools within your profile and email signature to signal the importance of names and pronouns, and to help others get them right. This QR code takes you through all the steps or visit warwick.ac.uk/saymyname.

1 Create an audio name badge
This practical tool allows others to hear you say your name and to practise in private.

2 Create a pronunciation guide to your name
This guide helps others understand how to say your name and can be used on name badges, email signatures and profiles. See Nameshouts.com for help.

3 My pronouns are ...
Help others by giving your pronouns when introducing yourself and in your profiles and email signatures.

4 Change the culture
Normalise including pronouns, audio name badges and name pronunciation guides in email signatures and profiles even if your name and pronouns are rarely misused.

FIND OUT MORE: warwick.ac.uk /saymyname

Sample inclusive email signature

Dr Jane Bryan PFHEA (she/her) 🔊 Hear my name

Pronunciation Notes: jAYn BRY-un

Reader in Law | Warwick Law School | Faculty of Social Sciences | University of Warwick

Inclusive email signatures – other tips

- If name order is not common in the dominant culture, a short explanation in an email signature/profile can be really useful. For example,

  My name is Bronco, and I have two surnames: García (my dad's) and Fernandez (my mum's). You can call me Bronco García or Bronco García Fernandez, but not Bronco Fernandez.

Co-created recommendation 3:

Phonetic pronunciation guides and audio name badges uploaded by individuals to their **people search page** that can be consulted by others throughout their time with the institution.

- LinkedIn and various Human Resources platforms have audio name recording functions which are often missed but are a great way to reduce name avoidance and mispronunciation (see here for some [example instructions](#)).

- Institutions might also want to consider embedding audio name badges across platforms to support individuals (such services are available from [Name Coach](#) and [Name Shouts](#)).

- Warwick University are conducting a trial, contact Dr Jane Bryan for more details of   how your team could be included – jane.bryan@warwick.ac.uk

Co-created recommendation 4:

HELPING OTHERS RESPECT NAMES IN MEETINGS

Simple activities can help build familiarity with correct pronunciation to create a culture where names are celebrated and respected.

INTRODUCTIONS
Create opportunities for people to say their own name so everyone gets used to hearing it pronounced correctly.

USE NAME CARDS AND BADGES
Use name cards and badges (especially with guides to pronunciation) to help everyone call others by name. Normalise audio name badges in email signatures.

PREPARE AHEAD
Where possible, use Google or Name Shouts to check how to pronounce names that are unfamiliar to you (check accuracy with the name-bearer themselves when you meet)

MAKE NAMES MATTER
Model greeting everyone by name, using their name in interactions and caring about correct pronunciation of names – encouraging everyone to check and to correct pronunciation when needed and to use the name they genuinely prefer.

Find out more:
warwick.ac.uk/say myname

Start conversations around the importance of names and model respectful behaviour

Co-created recommendation 5:

Some simple activities used as part of team building can help us get to know names and the person behind the name.

For example, sharing name stories can be very impactful. See resources for schools which can be easily repurposed and used even with colleagues that know each other well.

Other activities can be found here.

Co-created recommendation 6:

Surnames and first names appearing as they are said in teams meetings, when using @ in teams and in email (e.g. Jane Bryan not Bryan, Jane)

Clearer information on use of **chosen names** (for example, when a legal name will be used and why, how names be changed in systems). For example, see this 'Names at Warwick' guide.

Better **incorporation of diacritics and correct name order** in data systems to increase accuracy of names. Long name fields so that all names can be included.

Hear My Name project findings

Hear My Name project

Embedding audio name badges

[Hear My Name (warwick.ac.uk)](warwick.ac.uk)

Ground up change:

[NameBadge - Namecoach (name-coach.com)](name-coach.com)

'Hear My Name' pilot results: users (n149)

Even split of participants with often/sometimes mispronounced names and rarely/never.

Only 6 found the name badge difficult to create (most used namecoach)

Over 44% found no disadvantage to having a name badge in signature (main disadvantage reported was that not in other profiles/systems)

All said they would recommend to others and only one said they would discontinue use (because did not like sound of their voice)

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'Hear My Name' pilot results: recipients (n69)

Only one found it difficult to play back (68 found easy/very easy to use)

Everyone found some benefit in receiving an email with an audio name badge

Disadvantages where reported were: If no one else uses the name badge, it makes the user stand out in a negative way (n6) and should be on other platforms too (n9)

Recipients stated they would like audio name badges in Tabula, Teams, Moodle, my.wbs and People Search too

'Hear My Name' pilot results: recipients (n69)

Improved pronunciation of names (46%)

Helped reduce embarrassment by having a chance to practice privately (40%)

Enabled recipients to be more confident using someone name (43%)

Contributed to a feeling of community/belonging (28%).

Hear My Name project

Invitation to join a collaborative cross-institutional project

Jane.bryan@warwick.ac.uk

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Useful resources

Name Coach

Name Shouts

Further resources

Say My Name Library

Resources pack

Contact

- Dr Jane Bryan
- J.m.bryan@warwick.ac.uk