



## Introduction

This update of the UG's policy regarding language and culture is written in response to several current developments. The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has announced to evaluate language policy in Higher Education. The use of English in curricula is a topic of discussion amongst students and staff within the UG as well. Moreover, the Board of the University wishes to clarify its internationalization strategy after receiving the results of the 2018 institutional mid-term audit. This update includes policy regarding language use for internal and external communication, but also curriculum language and internationalization in a more general sense. The intention of the UG's policy is to reach a balance between an accessible inclusive environment and workability/pragmatism for all students and staff, both Dutch and international.

A 'guideline on language' will be drawn up, based on this update and former policy decided upon.

## Analysis

### 2.1 Institutional language

#### 2.1a - External communication

##### *Website, brochures and correspondence*

Recruitment and selection of students and staff is in Dutch and English (or other languages), due to the importance of attracting a diverse and talented student and staff population. All information on the UG website, including MyUniversity and the Student Portal, should therefore be in both Dutch and English. Communication about degree programmes with English as language of instruction, for instance in brochures and correspondence, can be in English or Dutch depending on the language of students.

##### *Logos and building names*

Logos and building names are in Dutch, in order to stress visible links between the UG and the inhabitants of Groningen. The University wants to focus on civic engagement, this includes connecting to local Dutch inhabitants and actively communicating within the Dutch public space. UG buildings are public buildings, in this sense. The university library for example should therefore have 'Universiteitsbibliotheek' on its building, since it stands in the middle of a Dutch speaking city and has an educational function for its society. If a building is named after a person, it is of less importance if the suffix is in Dutch or English: the proper name will be the reference. A building with a functional name should have a building sign in Dutch (local language). The English translation can be added less prominently.

#### 2.1b - Internal communication

##### *Board and University Council documents*

Following the University Council discussion of 31 August 2017 (see attachment UR17/131), the Board decided to start implementing a full English approach for Board and University Council policy documents from 2017 up to and including 2021. The formal final goal of this approach is to have all policy documents for the Board of the University and the University Council written in English only. This entails that staff members writing for the Board and Council should be trained in English writing skills and that the percentage of documents written fully in English gradually rises over the years. The desired effect of this approach is to make UG decision-making accessible to all students and staff.

##### *Faculty documents*

Faculties decide for themselves which language to use for their policy documents. If need be, a summary in the language other than used to write the document, can be added.



### *Meetings*

At the start of meetings where non-Dutch speakers are present, a decision about the use of language is made depending on the active and passive language levels of those present. This includes the possibility of Dutch speaking Dutch and internationals speaking English in the same meeting, if passive language levels are sufficient for understanding one another.

### **2.2 Educational language in curricula**

According to the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (Art. 7.2c WHW), the language of instruction and examination of a degree programme is Dutch *unless*:

- the subject of a degree programme is a foreign language.
- the teacher is a non-Dutch speaker.
- the guest lecturer is a non-Dutch speaker.
- the specific nature, organization or education quality or the background of students of the degree programme necessitates the use of another language, according to a *Code of Behaviour* drawn up by the institution.

The UG's *Code of Behaviour* regarding the language of instruction is the *Gedragscode voertaal 2018*<sup>1</sup>. The *Gedragscode* states that the language of instruction of a degree programme needs to be clear to the student before registration. During the official duration of a degree programme, the language may therefore not be changed.

### *Change of instruction language of degree programmes*

If a Faculty Board wants to change the language of instruction of a degree programme, a motivated request for the change enclosed with advice of the programme committee should be made to the Board of the University, which needs to confirm the change. The Board of the University has the legal role to check the balance of the UG offer of Dutch and non-Dutch degree programmes.

### **2.3 Overview of UG projects for internationalization and intercultural competences**

Internationalization is more than teaching in English or translating documents. The UG strives to be a truly international university, reflected in an inclusive environment. The UG internationalization strategy is implemented by developing projects such as:

- The International Classroom Project (IC, 2013-2020) involves curriculum development and development of required competencies for staff and students. At the UG, IC is approached as an institutional, organizational change process requiring changes at the personal, curriculum and institutional level.
- The aim of the Language and Culture Policy (LCP, 2015-2020) is to stimulate the improvement of language skills and intercultural competences of all UG staff and students. The Board acknowledges the differences between Faculties. Therefore, each Faculty can develop projects that meet its specific needs. Amongst other things, intercultural competence training and language training is stimulated: if a degree programme is taught in English, the language level of a teacher should be at least CEFR C1 and preferably C2 as much as possible.
- All Faculties are required to include internationalisation in their strategic plans, which are evaluated by the Board.
- Developing language skills and intercultural competences is a separate, optional module of the University Teaching Qualification (BKO) at the moment. It is being integrated in all BKO modules more and more.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 'VSNU Code of behavior language instruction' (2014) and on the 'Code of behavior international students' (2007, update 2014).



university of  
 groningen

office of the university