Rationale for the appointment of the UMCG Language and Culture Policy committee

Following the advices of the RUG committee, chaired by Prof. Frans Zwarts and installed to formulate a language and culture policy, the Board of the University of Groningen agrees with the need for a consistent institutional language policy at the RUG, given the fast developments in internationalisation at RUG and the changing needs from an increasingly diverse population of staff and students. This advice, in March 2014 established as “the RUG language and culture policy” is an important instrument for RUG for economic/governance motives as well as for reasons of quality assurance and innovation. Firstly, RUG faces a decreasing number of Dutch students after 2020 and needs to attract an increasing number of international students to ensure the same budget and volume. Secondly, more diversity of students and staff will add to the quality of education and research, and to innovation if dealt with effectively. Thirdly, academic skills in English are increasingly important for citation and publication, two relevant parameters in rankings. And last but not least, we learn from research that language and culture skills are increasingly important for the employability of our graduates. For these purposes, the curriculum should incorporate awareness of barriers in language and culture and strive to minimize them before 2020. In addition to this language/culture policy, multiple strategies need to be applied in an integrated approach, for example in international marketing/reputation management, admissions, international classroom, learning communities, learning outcomes, and in career guidance/“employability”.

The results in 2020 should be as follows: an innovative university, with high-quality research-based international education, with high positions in international rankings, with a high percentage of international students and staff, known locally, nationally and internationally for its open and inclusive environment, reflected in an adequate participation of international staff and students in governance and senior management positions, with the international character being confirmed by the acquisition of the NVAO quality label for internationalization (DFII/CeQuint).

The RUG language and culture policy paper implies:
- a compulsory approach for English for all staff and students with a good quality control system, to be integrated in BKO/UTQ for teaching staff in English-taught programs
- a voluntarily, yet stimulating approach for Dutch for all international students and staff
- a voluntarily, yet stimulating approach for other languages to be integrated in a number of international programs and to be stimulated at an individual level - a focus on intercultural awareness and competences, to be integrated in BKO/UTQ for teaching staff in English-taught programs.

As the first step to start the application of this policy the Board of the RUG has asked all faculties to formulate a language and culture policy, which follows the RUG policy but also fits with the
faculty’s vision and needs. Subsequently, in the UMCG situation the Dean of Education of the UMCG has installed a UMCG committee for Language and Culture Policy (UCL&C). With respect to the international classroom ambitions of the UMCG, the committee will align the activities with those of the RUG International Classroom committee.

Commission for the UMCG committee Language and Culture Policy

Although the UMCG has 3 regular (bachelor and master) programs (Medicine, Dentistry and Human Movement Sciences) and several research master programs, the initial focus of the committee will be on the programs of Medicine, including both bachelor (G2020) and master. As some of the topics are also partly discussed in the International Classroom Project of the RUG, the committee will link its policy development to the initiatives and developments within the RUG International Classroom Project committee.

The language and culture policy topics identified for the Medicine’s bachelor program so far are as follows.

1. English proficiency of (Dutch) UMCG faculty
   - designing a diagnostic system which helps (Dutch) UMCG faculty members involved with students’ education to reflect on their English proficiency;
   - designing a supportive system which offers faculty members more or less tailor-made solutions for the improvement of their proficiency (NB Courses will be offered by the RUG Language Center);
   - designing a monitoring system to guarantee the quality of the English proficiency of the UMG faculty.

2. Intercultural and Diversity aspects
   - screening the learning goals of the G2020 bachelor for intercultural and diversity aspects;
   - advising the bachelor coordinator, LC-deans and course directors for the inclusion of intercultural and diversity aspects in the UMCG’s bachelor program.

3. Dutch proficiency of foreign medical bachelor students
   - designing a monitoring system to qualify the Dutch proficiency of foreign medical bachelor students who aim to enter Dutch master program;
   - identification of the language tests which are suitable to measure the required Dutch proficiency in the medical context (master).

4. Cultural change among UMCG faculty
   - exploration of the need for an active “change policy” for UMCG staff to learn more about multicultural society and the presence of non-Dutch students and residents at the hospital wards;
   - advising the dean of education, master coordinator and the Central Committee of Postgraduate Training for the installment of training modules and courses to enhance such change policy.

Initially, the focus will be on topics 1 and 2.
Members of the committee

Dr. Rob Bakels, department of Neurosciences, chair
Dr. Jan Brommund, department of Anesthesiology
Dr. Janniko Georgiadis, department of Neurosciences
Drs. Luuk J. Kalverdijk, department of Psychiatry
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Consultants

Drs. Renée Bakker, Institute for Medical Education
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