



UPPSALA  
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# Language policy for Uppsala University

– guidance and advice on language choice  
and use

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## Contents

<b>1. Starting points</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Overall objectives</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Research and third-cycle (doctoral) education</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Starting points	4
3.2 Research and third-cycle education of an international standard	4
3.3 Collaboration with society	5
3.4 Development of Swedish for special purposes	5
3.5 Skills supply, recruitment and career development	5
<b>4. First- and second-cycle (Bachelor's and Master's) education</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 Starting points	6
4.2 Teaching	6
4.3 Required reading	7
4.4 Examinations	7
<b>5. Organisational language, administration, etc.</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1 Starting points	8
5.2 Guidelines, policy documents, information material, etc.	8
5.3 Contracts	9
5.4 Applications	9
5.4.1 Education	9
5.4.2 Employment	9
5.5 Meetings, working groups and faculty bodies	9
5.6 Miscellaneous	9

## 1. Starting points

Language plays a crucial role in all of Uppsala University's core tasks: education, research, collaboration and administration. It is therefore important that the language used at Uppsala University is appropriate, promotes efficiency and effectiveness, and provides good working conditions for all staff and students, regardless of their linguistic background.

Uppsala University aspires to be a world-leading university. A natural consequence of this ambition is that communications among staff and students, and contacts with other higher education institutions all over the world, often need to be in a language other than Swedish, generally English.

As a government agency, Uppsala University is subject to various laws, such as the Language Act, containing provisions on the Swedish language, the national minority languages and Swedish sign language. The Nordic Language Convention states that nationals of Nordic countries, where

necessary, are entitled to use their own language in contacts with government agencies and other public authorities in the Nordic countries.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and advice on language choice and use at Uppsala University.

The next section describes four overall objectives of the language policy. This is followed by sections on research and third-cycle (doctoral) education; first- and second-cycle (Bachelor's and Master's) education; and organisational language, administration, etc. As these sections are designed to be read independently, the presentation involves some repetition.

## 2. Overall objectives

The overall objectives of Uppsala University's language policy are linguistic awareness, parallel language use, multilingualism and plain language.

**Linguistic awareness** means that both education and research will be informed by an understanding of the role of language in learning abilities, creativity and the understanding of concepts, not least from the perspective of multilingualism. In addition, language use will be characterised by an awareness of the significance of language for gender equality, equal treatment and inclusion. Linguistic awareness also applies to the choice of language: the decision on which language to use will be governed by consideration of the consequences of using one language or another and the solution that is best for the particular activity will be chosen. The language used will also reflect the recognition that correct and well-formed communications, irrespective of language, are an important factor for the University's credibility and reputation.

**Parallel language use** means that Swedish and English are the main languages used in activities at Uppsala University and that the choice between them will be governed by what is most appropriate in each situation. This can also mean using the languages side by side, for example by making documents available in a Swedish and an English version. Where Swedish is concerned, one of the goals of parallel language use is to enable Swedish to continue to develop as a language for special purposes (LSP) across a broad range of disciplines, in accordance with the intentions of the Language Act. Systematic parallel language use will prepare students and staff for international careers but also enable those with non-Swedish backgrounds to prepare for work in the Swedish labour market, if they wish to do so. A good command of the Swedish language is also essential to enable knowledge and new research findings to be turned to account in various types of external collaboration. Another purpose of parallel language use is to give people from other cultures a heightened sense of belonging at Uppsala University, as their workplace, and in Swedish society.

**Multilingualism** means that the presence of languages other than Swedish and English is a natural and welcome aspect of life at Uppsala University. Multilingualism among students and staff is a resource and a quality factor. Linguistic diversity is a key factor in internationalisation and widening participation, and intercultural skills an important goal of education. This makes Uppsala University's broad range of languages a key resource.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the basis of the Nordic language community, which the *Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy* adopted by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2006 emphasises is important to preserve, Danish and Norwegian have generally been recognised as equivalent to Swedish in many public contexts.

<sup>2</sup> The linguistic environment at a university such as Uppsala, which is rich in traditions, also includes Latin, which, thanks to its central role in academic history, occupies a special position and is used in certain, primarily ceremonial, contexts.

*Plain language* mean that the University's communications, whether internal or external, are conducted using cultivated, simple and comprehensible language. This enhances quality, efficacy and legal certainty.

## 3. Research and third-cycle (doctoral) education

### 3.1 Starting points

The language used must be a conscious and appropriate choice. In the context of research and third-cycle education, it is particularly relevant that third-cycle education aspires to high quality and international viability, and that research results are disseminated and published internationally. Moreover, the University has a responsibility to collaborate with society at large and to ensure that the research conducted leads to social development and to the availability of a well-educated workforce in Sweden. Under the Language Act, government agencies such as the University "have a special responsibility for ensuring that Swedish terminology in their various areas of expertise is accessible, and that it is used and developed" (Section 12).

In many fields, English is the dominant academic language. It is therefore important that the University's researchers are able to write high-quality English texts and have a sufficiently advanced command of spoken English. However, in addition to this, they must be able to write academic texts in Swedish, and in this case too, high quality must naturally be maintained. Similar requirements apply to spoken Swedish.

### 3.2 Research and third-cycle education of an international standard

One of the reasons why Uppsala University must pursue world-class research is to be able to recruit the best researchers and students in international competition.

Research results must be published and disseminated internationally. This aspiration also concerns third-cycle education, as a high-class, internationally viable third-cycle education includes academic publications at internationally recognised conferences, in leading journals and in other major publishing channels. For this purpose, the language used in academic publications, including theses, must be chosen based on the main language for international dissemination and discussion in the field. English is often the most appropriate choice, but not always. The main principle is that the choice of language must take account of the purpose and target audience of the specific communication. This also applies to the choice of language at the public defence of a doctoral thesis, and in national and international research cooperation.

In accordance with the provision in Chapter 1, Section 6 of the Higher Education Act that "research results may be freely published", the choice of language is ultimately up to the researcher or research team. However, departments and similar bodies should develop research strategies to support their decisions.

Researchers and third-cycle students at Uppsala University must therefore be able to present and discuss their research in high-quality English, both in writing and orally, for the sake of international dissemination and cooperation. Uppsala University will provide continuous support for in-service training for all researchers and third-cycle students to help them develop such proficiency.

To increase their visibility and accessibility in Sweden and internationally, theses must include summaries in both Swedish and English, at least, whatever language has been chosen for the thesis.

### 3.3 Collaboration with society

Just as universities develop through interaction with society beyond academia, Uppsala University can contribute to the development of Swedish society through collaboration with private, public and NGO actors/sectors. The University's research must strengthen democracy and provide social benefit through innovation and the commercialisation of research results. To this end, Uppsala University must be able to communicate with target groups in Swedish society in cultivated, nuanced and comprehensible Swedish, this being the principal language in Sweden. However, since Swedish society is characterised by linguistic diversity, this does not preclude the use of other languages that are appropriate for the communicative purpose. Furthermore, Uppsala University already engages in extensive international collaboration with global enterprises and organisations that is of great importance for research, innovation and development in many areas. Here, English is often the language used for communication. Uppsala University will therefore provide in-service courses for researchers and third-cycle students that are tailored to their needs and prior knowledge, so as to enable them to develop their proficiency in communicating with other target groups outside academia, both orally and in writing, in Swedish and English. In certain contexts, support for languages other than Swedish and English can be relevant for collaboration and the University will take such needs into account.

### 3.4 Development of Swedish for special purposes

As a government agency, Uppsala University also has a special responsibility to ensure that "Swedish terminology in [its] various areas of expertise is accessible, and that it is used and developed" (Language Act, Section 12). By the active use of Swedish in appropriate research and collaboration contexts, including conscious attempts to use and create suitable Swedish terminology, the research community at Uppsala University will contribute to making the management and development of Swedish for special purposes a continuous and living process.

### 3.5 Skills supply, recruitment and career development

Uppsala University has an attractive, world-class research environment that attracts and welcomes researchers and third-cycle students from around the world. Uppsala University will create conditions enabling those who come here to stay and pursue a career in Sweden, either in or outside academia. In many cases, including appointment to teaching positions at Uppsala University, proficiency in Swedish is required. The University will therefore create conditions and incentives for its researchers and third-cycle students with native languages other than Swedish to learn and improve their Swedish, so that they are better able to integrate into Swedish society and working life. This will contribute both to the availability of a well-educated workforce and to integration in Sweden.

At the same time, Uppsala University will also seek to benefit from its staff's proficiency in languages other than Swedish and English, and will regard this as an asset in collaboration and internationalisation.

## 4. First- and second-cycle (Bachelor's and Master's) education

### 4.1 Starting points

Swedish has long been the principal language of education at Uppsala University, but English has become increasingly common. However, the situation varies widely between different fields. Other languages also occur. This is natural in courses where the language concerned is the object of study, but it may also be appropriate in other cases to use a language other than Swedish or English.

The University has many students, including visiting and exchange students, whose first language is not English, and this must be borne in mind when planning the teaching and learning approach in a course. It must likewise be borne in mind that Swedish may also be a foreign or second (third, etc.) language for many students. If the internationalisation of education is to be successful, it is important to be aware of this.

A key goal for the University is that its students have opportunities to become proficient in both Swedish and English. Teachers at the University must accordingly be able to provide high-quality teaching in both languages. The extent to which students and teachers may need to use the two languages will vary, and the measures needed must generally be seen in this light.

It is essential to provide opportunities for newly recruited teachers from other countries, foreign students and recently arrived migrants to learn Swedish. This is essential for the internationalisation of education at Uppsala University. Sufficient resources must therefore be allocated to give students who wish to take courses in Swedish the opportunity to do so. Similarly, resources for preparatory and access courses in Swedish for those who have basic education from other countries are important for both internationalisation and the integration of recently arrived migrants.

Having said that, English has an undeniable role as an overarching common language in the academic world, and in many scientific fields English has a very strong position as a publication language, technical language and organisational language. Consequently, a good knowledge of English is essential in many contexts. Uppsala University must therefore take responsibility for enabling students and teachers – whatever their linguistic background – to use English of a sufficiently high standard to enable them to engage in high-quality studies or teaching. Proficiency in English is often also essential in the working life for which academic study prepares.

Teachers are key actors in internationalisation. Teachers whose first language is Swedish will therefore be offered in-service training in English if necessary, so as to be able to teach in two languages. Similarly, teachers whose first language is English or another language will be offered training in Swedish.

### 4.2 Teaching

Language is a crucial factor in all education and opportunities for students to acquire a command of academic language and of technical language in their particular field are an important feature of all educational planning. This makes it essential to consider linguistic issues when planning programmes, developing courses, etc.

A first aspect of this is a conscious and considered choice of language: will the course be given in Swedish or in English, or can these languages be combined so that some components are in Swedish and others in English? In certain areas it may be appropriate to introduce English gradually in the course of a programme.

The general entry requirements for first-cycle programmes always include a knowledge of Swedish and English. If the programme is given in English, the Swedish requirement may be waived. In second-cycle programmes, the syllabus for each course will indicate language requirements in Swedish and/or English.

Applicants to a course or programme must receive clear information about the language in which it will be taught. If it is taught in both Swedish and English, this assumes that students have a knowledge of Swedish and Swedish must therefore be stated as the language of instruction for the course. If English is also used as the language of instruction in parts of a course, this should also be announced before the course is organised.

A second aspect concerns awareness of the role of language for learning abilities, creativity and the understanding of concepts. Teaching must be planned so that the students' command of academic language gradually increases, enabling them to manage increasingly advanced oral and written tasks, both as reader/writer and as listener/speaker.

A third aspect concerns the role of language in equal treatment and inclusion. The choice of language, linguistic form, patterns of interaction, words and contents in examples, etc., are important factors in this context and must be taken into account when planning teaching.

### 4.3 Required reading

With the exception of language courses and related courses, the required reading in courses given in Swedish is normally either in Swedish or in English. An attempt should be made to ensure that students have to use literature in both languages, partly to provide opportunities for developing academic proficiency in both languages. When the required reading is only in one language, the need for proficiency in language for special purposes should be borne in mind and met, as far as possible. For example, specialised terms can be made available in both languages in a compendium or similar resource. This is one way in which the University can take responsibility for Swedish terminology being accessible, used and developed, in accordance with Section 12 of the Language Act.

Another factor that should be taken into account in this context is the existence of statutory requirements for linguistic proficiency in certain fields. The Patient Data Act, for example, states: "Medical records drawn up in the health services must be written in the Swedish language, and must be clearly laid out and as easy as possible for patients to understand" (Chapter 3, Section 13).

In courses given in English, the required reading is usually only in English. However, even in such courses there may be reason to consider opportunities for learning specialised terminology in Swedish. This applies both to students who are proficient in Swedish, to enable them to develop their all-round command of the language, and to visiting students, etc., to improve their chances of employment in Sweden after completing their studies.

### 4.4 Examinations

In examinations, by default students have the right to answer questions in Swedish. However, in some cases students may need to use languages other than Swedish to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the course, for example, if the exam tests the student's knowledge of languages and linguistic terminology. In this case, the language concerned must be clear from the syllabus.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A more detailed discussion of language and examinations can be found in the guidelines issued by the Swedish Higher Education Authority, *Rättssäker examination* ("Fair examination"). The guidelines are available in Swedish with an English summary on the Authority's website, uka.se.

If, despite admission requirements<sup>4</sup>, students need to use translation aids, such as a dictionary, at an examination, the examiner may decide to allow students to take a dictionary along. The principle of equal treatment applies, which means that the decision applies to all students taking the examination.

## 5. Organisational language, administration, etc.

### 5.1 Starting points

The University's activities are governed by administrative acts and regulations such as the Language Act, the Administrative Procedure Act and the Act on National Minorities. The Language Act establishes that the language of public authorities in Sweden is Swedish. This means that everyone has the right to use Swedish in their communications with the University and that the University must be able to communicate in Swedish. It also means that the University has an important role in preserving and developing Swedish as the principal language in Sweden. The Language Act also requires public authorities to use language that is cultivated, simple and comprehensible. Further, the Administrative Procedure Act requires the University, as a public authority, to use interpreters and have documents translated if this is necessary to enable individuals who do not have a command of Swedish to assert their rights in contacts with the University.

The legislation concerning national minorities and minority languages gives individuals the right to receive general information about Uppsala University in one of the five national minority languages, if they wish to do so. Uppsala Municipality is in the administrative area for Finnish, which entails more far-reaching rights concerning this language. The Language Council of Sweden gives advice on the interpretation and application of the law regarding the national minority languages.

One of the objectives of this policy is parallel language use, which means that Swedish and English are the main languages used in the University's activities. For the sake of consistency in its use of English, Uppsala University should use British English on the external website and in the University's information material. In other connections, the context determines which variant of English should be used.

These rules have the following practical implications for the University's use of languages in different connections.

### 5.2 Guidelines, policy documents, information material, etc.

Memoranda, reports and official notes must be written in Swedish if they are documents that the University is obliged to produce under administrative law. This is the case, for example, when documents are prepared for official dispatch. In other cases, documents may be written in either language, with the understanding that they may need to be translated.

General information material and instructions in printed and digital formats will normally be produced in Swedish and English versions. Depending on target group, other languages should also be considered.

Guidelines and policy documents are to be drawn up in Swedish. They will be translated into English when this is considered necessary.

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<sup>4</sup> The general entry requirements for first-cycle programmes always include a knowledge of Swedish and English. If the programme is given in English, the Swedish requirement may be waived. In second-cycle programmes, the syllabus for each course will indicate language requirements in Swedish and/or English.

Official decisions and minutes of meetings at all organisational levels in the University are to be written in Swedish. A translation into English may be made following an assessment of need. If an individual needs a translation in order to assert their rights, the documents will be translated into the relevant language.

## 5.3 Contracts

Contracts and other agreements will generally be drawn up in Swedish and/or English. The choice of language depends on the party or parties concerned. Contracts in other languages may occur.

To avoid misunderstandings and guarantee legally certain processing, the University will offer translation and language editing support to those concerned when such documents are drawn up and/or entered into in English.

## 5.4 Applications

### 5.4.1 Education

Uppsala University follows the national guidelines issued by the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions concerning which language may be used in applications to the University's educational courses and programmes.

### 5.4.2 Employment

By default, applications for positions at the University are to be written in Swedish. In any event, it will always be possible to submit an application for a position at the University in Swedish, even when the University has stated in the announcement of the vacancy that applications may be submitted in another language.

## 5.5 Meetings, working groups and faculty bodies

Meetings, working groups and faculty bodies must be inclusive and involve all participants, whether staff or students, on equal terms. This applies not least in terms of language, for one reason so that internationally recruited staff and students can fully contribute the benefit of their experience and knowledge.

In general, meetings will be held in Swedish. However, this need not prevent participants from using other languages, as long as everyone participating in the meeting understands what is said and can make themselves understood in their language. It is appropriate to start a meeting by discussing which language or languages will be used, so that all participants are aware of the rules.

Minutes of meetings must always be written in Swedish. If necessary, the chair can decide that the minutes will also be translated into English. In many connections, even an English summary outlining important decisions can offer participants who do not have a command of Swedish a better chance of being fully involved in the activities of the department/equivalent.

## 5.6 Miscellaneous

Documents, instructions, warnings and information signs relating to the work environment will normally be in both Swedish and English, with Swedish being the primary option.

As far as possible, outdoor and indoor signs at the University giving directions will be in both Swedish and English, with Swedish being the normal language.

Names of departments/equivalents, divisions and units will be in Swedish and have an English translation.

As part of the internationalisation of the University's activities, departments/equivalents and HR services should endeavour to ensure that English translations of professional titles are consistent and understandable in international contexts.