

LANGUAGE POLICY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Published	Medarbetarportalen.gu.se/policy-rules-plans/
Decision-maker	Vice-chancellor
Unit responsible	Unit for Academic Language (ASK)
Date of decision	22 June 2015
Period of validity	Until further notice
Summary	<p>The Language Policy is summarised in five main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Swedish is to be the official language of communication at the University of Gothenburg. It must be possible to communicate knowledge in clear and comprehensible Swedish in academic areas dominated by English.2. The University of Gothenburg is to promote the increased use of English within academic areas currently dominated by Swedish.3. The University of Gothenburg is to endeavour to achieve linguistic diversity and work to ensure that competences in languages other than Swedish and English are recognised as useful qualifications for employment at the University of Gothenburg.4. The University of Gothenburg is to disseminate research results to mainstream society in clear and comprehensible Swedish and English.5. The University of Gothenburg is to be internationally visible and, in addition, information about the University and its work is to be made available in languages other than Swedish.

Language Policy for the University of Gothenburg

Introduction

One of the most important strategic objectives for the University of Gothenburg is to be a global university, attracting leading researchers from around the world.¹ Furthermore, our courses and study programmes are to offer student exchanges and be "characterised by a high level of scientific and artistic quality, with pedagogical excellence and a distinct international profile".²

The overall purpose of this Language Policy is to increase the linguistic awareness of everyone studying or working at the University. Furthermore, this document is to clarify the principles for language use at the University of Gothenburg.

According to Vision 2020, the University of Gothenburg is to be characterised by a work environment where respect of everyone's equal value is completely natural. The University is to work actively to promote equality and equal treatment throughout its activities.³ The University is to be accessible and inclusive for everyone in accordance with the Discrimination Act (Swedish Code of Statutes – SFS 2008:567). Under the Discrimination Act, 'inadequate accessibility' means "that a person with a disability is disadvantaged because of failure to take reasonable accessibility measures to put people with disabilities in a situation comparable to that of people without such disabilities based on accessibility requirements in statutes and other enactments".⁴ "Activities are to be formulated to enable employees and students with disabilities to have equivalent opportunities for participation and influence."⁵ This includes information and communication as well as the physical environment. The University is to also work to promote underrepresented groups of students being afforded access to the University.

1. Language use

The Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) passed a Language Act in 2009 (Swedish Code of Statutes – SFS 2009:600) dealing with language use in the public sector. It is prescribed by this Act that Swedish, as the main language in Sweden, is to be good, plain and comprehensible when exercising official authority. According to the Language Council of Sweden (2010, p. 7), *good* Swedish means "that the language is to comply with the official recommendations for good Swedish and be comprehensible for individuals. This calls for *plain* Swedish, i.e. language without any words that are difficult to understand and with a clear and simple structure". The Language Council of Sweden defines *comprehensible* Swedish (2010, p. 7) as language "adapted so that it can be understood by the recipient". It is also stated in the Language Act that "Government agencies are particularly responsible for ensuring that the Swedish terminology in their various areas of expertise is accessible, and that it is used and developed".⁶

Swedish is normally the main language within certain academic areas, particularly those where research is dependent on linguistic interpretation. The spoken and written language is less important in other academic areas such as, for instance, artistic areas, and there is consequently less dependence on which language is

¹ University-wide Policy for Internationalisation 2014-2020, V2014/474

² Vision 2020

³ Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equality and Equal Treatment at the University of Gothenburg, Dnr V 2015/249

⁴ Swedish Code of Statutes – SFS 2008:567, [*sic* Chapter 1], Section 4, item 3.

⁵ Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equality and Equal Treatment at the University of Gothenburg, Dnr V 2015/249

⁶ Swedish Code of Statutes – SFS 2009:600, Section 12

used. When applicable, teaching may also be carried out in other languages, for example, when teaching language.

Swedish is the official language of communication at the University of Gothenburg although internationalisation may mean that English is used in parallel.⁷ This is not at odds with the endeavor to increase linguistic diversity. Widespread multilingualism not only increases the potential for the University's students and employees to make international contacts, but is at the same time a good incentive for foreign researchers, teachers and students to come here. The University of Gothenburg must, therefore, endeavour to give employees and students the possibility of developing competences in different languages and cultures.

As a university with a global perspective, the University of Gothenburg is, therefore, to

- help in the development of students' language skills and also contribute to academic language use and the students' the ability to communicate their knowledge in different languages, including to people outside academia
- promote the mobility, employability and competitiveness of students and employees in the labour market by encouraging language studies and use of languages other than Swedish
- support linguistic diversity within the organisation
- be an attractive university for foreign researchers, teachers and students
- communicate information via websites and relevant documents/publications in languages other than Swedish, primarily in the language with the greatest international dissemination, i.e. English.

2. Swedish

Normally Swedish is to be the main language of teaching in first-cycle courses. First-cycle studies should mainly result in students being able to express themselves in clear and comprehensible Swedish in matters relating to their studies. When teachers provide subject feedback, students are to also be provided with feedback about their use of both Swedish and English language for special purposes. Independent second-cycle projects and dissertations in a language other than Swedish are to have full summaries in Swedish. Dissertations in a language other than Swedish are to have a summary in Swedish.

The University is to endeavour to use Swedish language for special purposes correctly within all of its academic areas. Swedish language for special purposes is to be evaluated and developed to enable knowledge to be communicated to non-specialists. The requirement for competence in language for special purposes is to be expanded in second-cycle courses and study programmes. See the Unit for Academic Language (ASK).

3. English

The University of Gothenburg is to be an attractive university for foreign researchers, teachers and students both within and outside the Nordic countries. A prerequisite for the internationalisation of the University of Gothenburg is that 'an attractive array of courses and programmes of high quality be made available in English'.⁸

⁷ Communication Strategy for the University of Gothenburg, Dnr V 2014/71

⁸ University-wide Action Plan for Select Aspects of Internationalisation 2014-2016

The first-cycle reading list is to be in English, at least to some extent, to provide a foundation for the use of English at higher levels. Teaching ought to have elements of English to increase and strengthen language comprehension. More English is to be used in second- and third-cycle courses and study programmes than in first-cycle courses and study programmes in order to

- encourage and stimulate mobility and attract incoming students
- improve the ability of Swedish students to communicate internationally and increase their prospects of being noticed internationally
- improve the prospects of Swedish students being admitted to third-cycle courses and study programmes in other countries
- be able to attract highly qualified foreign researchers, teachers and research students.

The second-cycle reading list may/is, to a large extent, to be in English, and teaching may be carried out in Swedish and English, subject to the precondition that relevant literature is available. If the teacher is foreign and/or the teaching group includes foreign students, teaching may be carried out in Swedish and English in parallel with, for example, visual support in the other language.

All teachers ought to be prepared to teach in English or at least bilingually, with visual support in English. See the PIL Unit for competence development in using languages other than your mother tongue as the language of instruction.⁹

The University of Gothenburg is to constitute an attractive and stimulating environment for visiting foreign lecturers and students. They are to have a good linguistic reception in terms of signs, folders, websites, electronic mailings, etc., also written in languages other than Swedish. Information about courses and study programmes/programme administration and staff/staff administration is to be presented in English and, when applicable, other relevant languages.¹⁰

International contacts and an international quality audit represent preconditions for research of a high international quality. Therefore, the ambition of all researchers at the University should be to contribute to the international research environment by publishing in English and other relevant languages and also by attending international conferences.

The proportion of dissertations in English at the University of Gothenburg is to increase. Dissertations written in Swedish are to also have a full summary in English. Recently qualified doctoral holders whose dissertations have been written in Swedish are to be encouraged to publish in English or other relevant world language in the form of research articles.

See the Unit for Academic Language for academic writing courses in Swedish and English.

4. Other languages

The University of Gothenburg is to promote the opportunities for students and teachers to acquire scholarly literature in languages other than Swedish and English. A good prerequisite for functional communication with people in other countries is knowledge of their language. Language competences also offer shortcuts for understanding other cultures and promote knowledge development.

⁹ The PIL unit at the University of Gothenburg offers courses in English in various pedagogic aspects of teaching.

¹⁰ Communication Strategy for the University of Gothenburg, Dnr V 2014/71

The University of Gothenburg provides courses and study programmes in a number of languages that appear to be gaining ever-increasing global importance. Competences in languages other than Swedish and the major European languages ought to be used significantly more than is currently the case. The University ought to, in consultation with other higher education institutions, invest in developing and reinforcing the preconditions for this activity.

The University of Gothenburg is to work to ensure that the value of languages and cultural competences as a credential is made visible. Language and cultural competences ought to be recognised as useful qualifications for employment at the University of Gothenburg, particularly having studied, taught and/or published in languages other than Swedish and English.

Students are to be given the opportunity to document the language(s) in which they have studied.

5. Information about research and development work

Information about the University's research and development is one of the University's three main tasks. Findings within research and development are to be disseminated to mainstream society. However, conveying research findings to non-specialists is impeded by the fact that the academic language itself has its own linguistic form, with language for special purposes of varying levels of difficulty.

English, alongside Swedish, is a given working language for most researchers in Sweden. However, Swedish is the main language in Sweden and, for this reason, researchers at the University of Gothenburg must be able to convey their knowledge in clear and comprehensible Swedish. The University's researchers ought to assume personal responsibility for developing the Swedish language in academic communication by maintaining and developing the professional language available for special purposes and seeking to facilitate that the English used is readily adaptable to Swedish language use. The third task is also to be viewed from an international perspective. For this reason, it must also be possible to communicate research findings in clear and (for non-specialists) comprehensible English and/or other languages.

6. Presenting the University in languages other than Swedish

The University of Gothenburg is to be internationally visible. Information about the University must also be available in languages other than Swedish, in the first instance English. Relevant websites and documents/publications are to be accessible internationally. The University has procured translation and language editing services.

The Student Unions are to be encouraged to have relevant information in English.

7. Unit for Academic Language

This Unit is to offer both staff and students language support and courses to enhance competence and develop language. This may be done through, for example

- courses in Swedish for incoming international/foreign staff and students
- courses in academic Swedish and English for staff and students
- courses in English to develop the language of administrative staff
- language support/advice in Swedish and English for both staff and students.

Summary

1. Swedish is to be the official language of communication at the University of Gothenburg. It must be possible to communicate knowledge in clear and comprehensible Swedish in academic areas dominated by English.
2. The University of Gothenburg is to promote the increased use of English within academic areas currently dominated by Swedish.
3. The University of Gothenburg is to endeavour to achieve linguistic diversity and work to ensure that competences in languages other than Swedish and English are recognised as useful qualifications for employment at the University of Gothenburg.
4. The University of Gothenburg is to disseminate research results to mainstream society in clear and comprehensible Swedish and English.
5. The University of Gothenburg is to be internationally visible and, in addition, information about the University and its work is to be made available in languages other than Swedish.
