

University of Iceland Language Policy

Approved by the University Forum on 10 May and by the University Council on 19 May 2016.

Policy

The University of Iceland is the foremost scientific and educational institution of the Icelandic nation and shall work towards the “dissemination of knowledge and skills to students as well as to society in general”, in accordance with the Higher Education Institution Act, no. 63/2006. The University therefore has a serious responsibility to promote the development of the Icelandic language and ensure that it is usable – and used – in all academic fields. At the same time, the University is part of the international academic community and actively participates in many forms of international collaboration in the fields of teaching, research and administration. The University Language Policy is born of this dual role; the University Strategy 2016-2021 states that the language policy shall “[support] both the Icelandic language [...] and the international work of the University”.

The basic principle of the language policy is that **the written and spoken language of the University is Icelandic**, whether in teaching, research or administration. Icelandic is therefore the default language for all work at the University and shall be used unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise. This is in conformity with the parliamentary resolution on Icelandic language policy from 2009 and the Act on the status of the Icelandic language and Icelandic sign language, no. 61/2011. In accordance with this legislation, Icelandic sign language is the first language of those who rely on it for expression and communication; it therefore enjoys special rights within the University.

English is also a very important language in the work of the University, due to international students and teaching staff, due to the need to prepare students for participation in the international academic community, and due to the University’s participation in all kinds of international collaboration. It is therefore emphasised that information on the University and its operations, as extensive and detailed as possible, should be available in English on the public University website and on the University internal web (Ugla). The University also encourages students and teaching staff to use foreign languages other than English in their work where possible.

Implementation and realisation

1. The standard of written and spoken Icelandic within the University of Iceland shall be exemplary, from both students and staff. The University writing centres shall be enhanced and enabled to serve students in all of the University’s schools. Teaching staff shall have the option of receiving language consultation services or other specialised guidance in presenting course material in Icelandic. Such consultation might, for example, be offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning or writing centres.
2. The teaching language for programmes and individual courses shall always be specified in the course catalogue, such that any deviation from the general rule that

Icelandic is the language of the University shall always be made explicit in advance. Where international students are permitted to take courses taught in Icelandic in accordance with the course catalogue, teaching staff shall seek to accommodate them, although without changing the teaching language.

3. Icelandic shall be the default teaching language in undergraduate studies, except for language teaching. Teaching in English shall be restricted to programmes where there is a specific reason to teach in English; courses taught by teaching staff who are not native speakers of Icelandic; and courses which must be taught in English due to the University's international collaborative work. Mandatory undergraduate courses, except in language teaching and programmes taught in English, shall as a rule be taught in Icelandic.
4. Icelandic shall be the default teaching language in postgraduate studies, except in language teaching, although faculties may decide to offer postgraduate programmes partially or entirely in English. If a teacher speaks Icelandic and there are no international students in the class, a faculty may permit teaching in Icelandic despite the course catalogue specifying English as the teaching language.
5. Course assessment shall be conducted in the same language as teaching. In courses (other than language teaching courses) taught in English by Icelandic-speaking teaching staff, the faculty may permit students to submit assignments and sit examinations in Icelandic. In courses taught in Icelandic, the faculty may permit students who are not native speakers of Icelandic to submit assignments and sit examinations in another language.
6. Even though English is the main language of doctoral theses, they may be written in Icelandic if the doctoral student so wishes, faculty rules permit and circumstances allow. The faculty in question (postgraduate study committee or faculty council) and the Graduate School shall evaluate in each case whether impartial Icelandic-speaking experts with sufficient specialist knowledge are available such that it will certainly be possible to obtain qualified opponents if the thesis is written in Icelandic.
7. Teaching staff in permanent positions and administrators whose native language is not Icelandic shall perform their jobs in Icelandic following a reasonable adjustment period. The ability to teach and perform administrative duties in Icelandic shall be a factor in appointment to a permanent position. Job advertisements shall make reference to the University language policy. The University shall offer free Icelandic courses for international teaching staff, who shall be able to apply for a reduction in teaching duties if they take the courses.
8. It shall be made easier for teaching staff and students who are native speakers of Icelandic to take part in University operations in English. Courses in academic English for teaching staff and students shall be enhanced and made a mandatory component of doctoral programmes where appropriate. Special English support services shall be introduced for students, for example at writing centres or the Language Centre, to help them in their studies and with writing essays in English.
9. It shall be made easier for students whose native language is not Icelandic to participate in studies and other activities in Icelandic within the University.

International students commencing studies taught in Icelandic shall sit a placement examination in the language. They shall have the opportunity to take Icelandic courses to make it easier for them to follow teaching in Icelandic. Special Icelandic courses and other support shall be available for exchange students.

10. For programmes and courses taught in English, certain minimum requirements will be made of students regarding English proficiency. International students who are not native English speakers and apply for a programme taught in English shall be required to demonstrate that they have received a minimum grade in a recognised international English qualification for foreigners. Faculties shall define minimum requirements for the English proficiency of exchange students.
11. The needs of staff and students who use sign language shall be accommodated such that they are able to use Icelandic sign language to the same extent as Icelandic in their work/studies at the University. Sign language interpreters shall be available as needed, both in class and for other communication between students and teaching staff, as well as in meetings and lectures as appropriate.
12. Teaching staff shall be encouraged to communicate their knowledge to students and the general public in Icelandic through books, articles, teaching material and other channels. Academic books and journal articles in Icelandic shall be eligible for service points as well as research points. It shall also be possible to award service points for other communication of academic material in Icelandic, such as the consolidation of teaching material, advisory work for the government and public, and participation in public discourse.
13. Teaching staff shall be encouraged to work on creating Icelandic terminology within their academic field and communicating this terminology to students and the general public. Individual subjects and disciplines shall see to the systematic creation of terminology and glossaries, each in their own field. Teaching staff shall also be encouraged to translate academic works, teaching material and literature into Icelandic. It shall be possible to reward teaching staff within the University Evaluation System for work of this nature.
14. All meetings and other operations of University departments, faculties and schools, as well as committees in the University administration, shall be conducted in Icelandic wherever possible. Faculty heads and committee chairs shall also ensure that teachers and other staff who do not understand Icelandic are able to follow meetings and other administrative proceedings and participate as necessary.
15. Written documents within the University administration, such as official information issued by the University or its units, e.g. meeting notices, meeting minutes, invitations to lectures, event announcements etc., shall always be in Icelandic, although an English version shall be included where appropriate. Individual meeting documents may, however, be in a foreign language in certain circumstances.
16. Language technology shall be used to assist and guide staff and students in their use of the language. Students, teaching staff and other staff shall have the option to make use of all available language technology for Icelandic, e.g. spelling and grammar checking software, speech synthesisers, speech analysers and translation software. Special

emphasis shall be placed on language technology which aids disabled people in their studies and daily lives.

17. The electronic environment at the University shall be in Icelandic as far as possible. The default user interfaces for all software commonly used by staff and students within the University shall be in Icelandic. UI Computing Services shall have any software distributed within the University translated into Icelandic. Teaching staff and students shall be encouraged to take part in the translation of open-source software.
18. A standing language committee shall operate within the University, under the auspices of the rector and comprising representatives from all schools, central administration and students. This committee shall advise administrators and other University staff on issues concerning the Icelandic language, submit proposals regarding the implementation of the language policy and oversee its execution, as well as being responsible for publicising the policy and any necessary revision.

Oversight and responsibility

The University administration and individual schools, faculties and institutes, as applicable, are responsible for more detailed implementation and realisation of the University of Iceland language policy. The rector is responsible for the policy and may authorise a temporary deviation from individual provisions if necessary.