

**MUNI**

# **Masaryk University Language Policy**

**Masarykova univerzita**

Žerotínovo nám. 617/9, 601 77 Brno, Česká republika  
T: +420 549 49 1111, E: [info@muni.cz](mailto:info@muni.cz), W: [www.muni.cz](http://www.muni.cz)

## Content

1. Context .....	3
2. Purpose .....	4
3. Status of Languages at Masaryk University .....	5
4. Languages in Teaching, Studies and Supervision: Declaration.....	6
5. Languages in Teaching, Studies and Supervision: Implementation .....	7
6. Languages in Research at Masaryk University: Declaration .....	8
7. Languages in Research at Masaryk University: Implementation .....	9
8. Languages in the University's Day-to-day Operations and Services: Declaration .....	10
9. Languages in the University's Day-to-day Operations and Services: Implementation .....	11
10. Language Skills of the University's Staff: Implementation .....	12
11. Communications at Masaryk University: Implementation .....	13
Names and titles.....	13

## 1. Context

Masaryk University has established becoming a widely recognized research university as one of its goals, i.e. to be an institution providing high quality and attractive study programmes to its students as well as in conducting excellent and impactful research across a wide range of disciplines. For this reason, a continuing focus internationalisation is both a necessary precondition and a useful tool for achieving excellence in both learning and teaching, and research. Strategies and policies previously adopted by Masaryk University have resulted in positive outcomes – there are currently more international students coming to the University to study and more lecturers and researchers from abroad are being employed. The number of study programmes and individual courses taught in English or other foreign languages continues to increase. A universal requirement for each Masaryk University student to obtain a qualified international experience has been declared. Recruitment procedures for academic staff are transparent and vacant positions are internationally published. The University supports students and staff in their efforts to improve their language skills. Positive changes occur at the research too. There has been number of international grants, scientific collaborations, etc. In order to proceed further, the University has recognized the need to establish an official Language Policy.

As Masaryk University represents the case of an institution operating primarily in a setting where a relatively uncommon language is the national language, the Masaryk University Language Policy deals primarily with establishing an appropriate and satisfactory level of co-existence between Czech and English as an academic “lingua franca”. However, language choices at the University also include the status of other foreign languages. Multilingualism and knowledge of one’s own and other cultures promote creative thinking and a community spirit.

The Slovak language has a special position at the University. Given the historical, cultural, and linguistic connections between the Czech and Slovak nations, and in order to maintain its position of a preferred choice for hundreds of talented Slovak students, the University treats the Slovak language as equivalent to Czech (unless there is a specific need for a different treatment). Similarly, when this Language Policy mentions Czech, also Slovak is implicitly included, unless it is explicitly stated otherwise.

## 2. Purpose

By formulating a Language Policy, highlighting examples of best practices and defining desirable standards, the University seeks to prevent unnecessary or unjustifiable differences in language usage among study programmes, faculties and/or departments. The University believes that increasing the level of transparency can cultivate an environment that supports a true and full integration of international staff.

The University declares its intention:

- to ensure that the language and communication methods used in research, teaching, administration, services and communications are appropriate and understandable, and that the standards of language usage reflect the high quality of the University's operations;
- to raise linguistic awareness, to build well-functioning bilingualism, to highlight multilingualism as a strength and to encourage the parallel use of different languages;
- to meet the challenges of internationalisation;
- to secure the position of the national languages in research communication and teaching;
- to support and enhance the implementation of the University's official policy of bilingualism;
- to draft guidelines for teaching and research conducted in different languages;
- to communicate in both Czech and English in such a way as to ensure that staff and students are in a position to operate successfully in their roles within the organisation regardless of linguistic and cultural backgrounds;
- to ensure that students and staff who are not proficient in Czech are able to communicate with relevant administrative staff in English;
- to ensure that communication regarding the rights and duties of staff and students is available both in Czech and in English;
- to ensure that formal, written letters / emails / other relevant documents are available both in Czech and in English;
- to ensure that online communications and websites with relevance for non-Czech speaking students, staff members and / or their internal or external audiences are available in English;
- to foster the integration of students and staff who are not native Czech speakers, and to develop (optimal integration of foreign staff, lecturers, students and doctoral students and the development of their understanding of Czech customs and traditions;
- to define and establish a functional level of Czech for international staff and international students in their specific study, work and social environments and for future employability and mobility, and to provide adequate support;
- to integrate international staff into university culture.

### 3. Status of Languages at Masaryk University

Masaryk University is continuously developing an active and functional multilingual policy that corresponds with the position of Czech society in the contexts of global research, education, and labour markets. Masaryk University considers languages a resource within the academic community and requires an active use of foreign languages in international teaching and research.

As the second oldest university teaching in Czech, Masaryk University respects the critical position of the Czech language. It is a point of honour for Masaryk University to protect, preserve and develop the Czech language in all its complexity.

At the same time, the internationalisation of teaching and research requires ongoing activity in foreign languages. Diversity in terms of linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds and competences of students and university staff are considered to be an undisputable asset for Masaryk University. This is apparent in Masaryk University's efforts to spread cultural and linguistic wealth by offering full programmes in more than twenty-five foreign languages and by recruiting both international students and staff who meet Masaryk University requirements for skills in diverse languages essential for their work and studies. At Masaryk University, a foreigner can study or hold a position, when appropriate, without having a command of Czech. Having a good command of English, however, is generally required.

It is undeniable that English (in all its varieties accepted by the international academic community) has become the lingua franca for a vast majority of scholarly disciplines and the language of communication for researchers, teachers, students and university administrators worldwide. Developing and increasing the range of study and research programmes in English, English is an integral part of creating an international academic environment without undermining the status of the Czech language. The growing impact of English as academic lingua franca may weaken users' skills in their first language and in languages other than English; therefore, Masaryk University provides teaching and promotes a range of activities in a wide variety of languages. The multilingual skills of students, researchers and staff represent the opportunity to develop the University international activities and prestige.

## 4. Languages in Teaching, Studies and Supervision: Declaration

Masaryk University provides multilingual teaching by offering courses and programmes in Czech, English and other languages to meet the requirements of both the global academic world and labour markets. Teaching in foreign languages can be included within degree programmes when relevant, for example to provide the teaching or meet the learning outcomes. In order to improve and maintain language skills, Masaryk University encourages the use of scholarly literature and other teaching and research resources in a range of languages. In the course of students' academic counselling, attention is paid to the benefits of multilingual skills and to the fact that the language of teaching and examinations can be a language other than the students' mother tongue. Individuals may not be fluent in the languages in question; in many situations, different languages may be used in parallel. Multilingualism can also include the use of a language of provision that is different from the language of study. For example, students may attend courses in Slovak or English, but complete the associated assignments and examinations in Czech.

Masaryk University requires a high, university-level language proficiency in Czech, English and other languages used in studies, teaching, theses and dissertations. A goal of the University's educational process is to produce genuinely multilingual experts who can shift between languages effortlessly in real-life situations. Keeping a high standard of language proficiency is the responsibility of every member of the university community. University teachers should promote high-quality language usage by setting an example. All students are responsible for improving their own language skills, both in their mother tongue and in other languages. Masaryk University encourages foreign students and staff to learn and improve their Czech.

## **5. Languages in Teaching, Studies and Supervision: Implementation**

Masaryk University provides information about its language policies and the benefits of multilingualism for students to encourage the development of their language and communication competences throughout their degree studies.

When Masaryk University recruits international students, the necessary language skill level in both English and Czech is expected together with the faculty's admissions criteria. Each faculty makes its own decisions regarding the required language skill level within the University's general admissions policies for new students.

Students are informed about the language levels, courses and certifications required for their degrees at the beginning of their studies, as well as the possibility that the language of teaching and studies may not be their native language.

Faculties are encouraged to integrate language skills into subject-specific teaching.

Teachers providing teaching through the medium of English are offered language and communication support in order to increase their competence to work and teach in English in a multicultural academic environment.

## **6. Languages in Research at Masaryk University: Declaration**

Language is a central tool in research, although its role varies according to discipline. Comprehensive language skills and ability to communicate in English and other relevant foreign languages intensively is an integral part of the skill set for all University researchers. Masaryk University aims to support the development of these skills by researchers at all levels.

In addition to other dimensions, the quality of science is perceived in terms of its internationalisation, i.e. its impact on the international academic community and/or specific international cooperation. Therefore, researchers should always maximize their efforts to engage with international aspects in their research.

Masaryk University supports the diversity of research teams and the involvement of the international experts and scholars. This is assured by advancing inter-institutional cooperation as well as by the direct recruitment of outstanding foreign researchers to positions at Masaryk University, including research positions at all levels (from PhD students and postdocs to senior researchers) as well as tenure track academic positions (assistant, associate and full professor tracks).



## 7. Languages in Research at Masaryk University: Implementation

The results of research activities should be presented in both written and spoken formats, with the choice based on the best practices of the relevant discipline and with respect to the target audience. The language of the presentation should always promote an understanding of the scope and content of the research and enable further use of the results and create possibilities for cooperation.

Considering the main role of English in the majority of the research fields, presentation to the international research community is preferably in English. It is recommended that the Czech language is used to present the research results to the Czech public, national stakeholders and local end users. The aim is to inform these audiences in an appropriate and comprehensible manner, and where appropriate to promote participation in the research project, in accordance with the concepts of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and Open Science.

For direct communication among researchers and/or administration within the Masaryk University, English should be used in written (emails) and spoken forms whenever at least one non-Czech speaking participant is involved.

All documentation targeting foreign employees, or a group of employees where foreign workers can be expected to be present should be made available in both English and Czech versions that must correspond to each other in terms of content and scope.

Recruitment for research positions, including PhD candidates, should be conducted in an open, transparent and international format. Advertisements of positions are to be posted in Czech and English, and the selection procedure should be fully (for foreign applicants) or at least in part (for Czech speaking applicants) conducted in English. Good command of English is expected from all applicants for research positions.

In order to develop the language and communication skills of researchers and staff (including administrators), Masaryk University promotes training activities to specifically address different needs and levels of knowledge of the participants. Researchers are encouraged to use appropriate resources for proofreading of foreign language texts.

## **8. Languages in the University's Day-to-day Operations and Services: Declaration**

Services for international students, teachers and researchers are developed in Czech and English from the perspective of client needs and the appropriateness of the services. The priority of Masaryk University is that students and staff have the possibility of using Czech, English or other languages, when relevant, in handling their own affairs and to receive written documents, decisions and responses, forms, examination questions and entrance examinations as well as admissions and academic counselling in Czech or English or other languages, when relevant. Information of a fundamental and permanent nature as well as information which relates to the protection of the rights of the students and staff are made available in Czech, English or other languages when relevant.

Support services for non-Czech-speaking students and staff are ensured.

## 9. Languages in the University's Day-to-day Operations and Services: Implementation

The parallel use of Czech and English or another language is agreed at the university level, at faculties and other university units or in various situations on both general and case-by-case bases.

The University, faculty and unit coordinators and leadership address language issues so that all members of the community are aware of the University's language policies and practices.

Masaryk University may establish a Masaryk University Language Policy team in order to discuss the Language Policy and to decide on the use of languages in different situations. The Language Policy team will include faculty and unit representatives, experts on language use and language learning. The Language Policy team responsibilities may include for example: discussing language issues together with faculties and other University units, offering examples and templates for best practices, providing suggestions for the development of language activities, or supporting the implementation of measures and their monitoring. The Masaryk University Language Policy team will draft guidelines on how the use of languages will be agreed in official contexts and when decisions are made in meetings, work groups or other equivalent organs. The Masaryk University Language Policy team will publish examples of best practices on how multilingual communication can work in units' everyday operations and how it can be learned. These examples will highlight flexible language models from real-life situations.

Services are provided in different languages according to client needs. External service providers who offer services to Masaryk University are informed of the Masaryk University Language Policy and are required to respect it. When negotiating services, it must be ensured that the service provider can offer services in Czech, English or other relevant language.

Support services, such as the IT support or providers of study guidance and student advice, ensure that the service is available in Czech, English or other languages when relevant.

Masaryk University, faculties and individual units take the Masaryk University Language Policy into consideration in all their operations.

## **10. Language Skills of the University's Staff: Implementation**

Language skills related to job duties are identified for individual positions on a job-specific basis when recruiting new staff at faculties, departments and other units of the University. The required language skills are demonstrated by the applicant during recruitment with certificates and/or interviews. The faculty, department or other University unit determines who is responsible for the task of assessing the skills.

Teaching staff develop their language and communication skills so that students are able to request supervision of theses and other guidance in Czech, English or other languages when relevant.

Masaryk University offers customised courses of Czech at Masaryk University to enable international staff members to integrate into the work environment.

Masaryk University offers customised courses of English and other languages at Masaryk University to enable staff members integrate into the work environment.

## 11. Communications at Masaryk University: Implementation

Societal interaction compels the University to communicate in different languages as required, bearing in mind the target constituency and the prevailing circumstances. In global societal interaction, the language appropriate to the situation is the one to be used.

### Names and titles

The names of the University's faculties, departments, units and independent institutes, job titles and the names of disciplines are given in Czech and English. When new units are established or names changed, the relevant body ensures that the names are confirmed in both Czech and English.

Official documents, PR and marketing documents:

The University's position as an international multidisciplinary institution of higher education requires that the language used in all printed and marketing material and in digital information is of a high standard. Every unit within the University is responsible for carrying out this task.

The University's strategic and other key documents are being published in Czech and English.

The University's brochures and newsletters are available in Czech and English. Exceptions to this practice can be made under special circumstances.

Signs are in Czech and English. Exceptions can be made only if it is impossible to follow this instruction in practice, or if there are other special reasons for such an exception.

The University, its faculties, departments and independent institutes will have intranet and internet pages in Czech and English and/or other relevant language(s). With respect to the target audience, the content and scope of web pages may differ for each language version, but all versions should include up-to-date descriptions of and contact information for the unit so that an external person can easily obtain the required information. English websites should also provide information about teaching in English and other foreign languages.

Masaryk University is presented in social media in Czech and English.

