

Language Policy of the University of the Faroe Islands

1. Introduction

The University of the Faroe Islands is the primary higher education and research institution in the Faroe Islands, the nation's only university and its foremost knowledge centre. The University undertakes research and research-based teaching at a high international level, providing for synergy between research and teaching to serve the evolving needs and priorities of the Faroes and their wider region.ⁱ

Faroese is the official language of the Faroes. The Faroese community, which is largely responsible for resourcing the University, prioritizes its language in a wide range of areas including schools, public administration, mass media and in cultural institutions. Reflecting this, the University is the only university in the world with an obligation to conduct research-based teaching in Faroese.

The Faroese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture presented a report in 2007 about language policy. A recommendation was that the University should adopt a language policy to support and strengthen the position of the Faroese language across all fields of higher education and research in the Faroe Islands.ⁱⁱ

More recently, *The University of the Faroe Islands, Strategic Plan 2020-24* has acknowledged the "special responsibility" of the University in "preserving and developing the Faroese language". The *Plan* highlights that this responsibility "is of profound importance for the whole society, in terms of social inclusion, democracy and development, and it is one which the University will take seriously at all times". To support this, the *Strategic Plan* indicates that the University will support "the usability and usage of the Faroese Language", and identifies the following commitments and priorities: ⁱⁱⁱ

- *To develop and implement a clear language policy and be a language role model amongst universities in similar sized countries and territories with their own languages.*
- *To promote the use and development of Faroese academic language, including precise scientific terminology, in all disciplines, and to support the publication of high-quality academic work in Faroese.*
- *To support the teaching of the Faroese language at all levels of education and its use and development in wider society, and to seek to do so also amongst Faroese people living abroad.*
- *To seek to contribute to improving the teaching of Faroese to non-native speakers, and particularly for those whose native language is other than a Scandinavian language.*

2. The University of the Faroe Islands: The primary higher education and research institution in the Faroe Islands, a part of the international academic community and a developing University which can benefit from the contributions of non-Faroese speakers with relevant experience.

The University has a special responsibility to support the usability and use of the Faroese language. It also, as part of the international academic community, must actively participate in a wide range of collaborations with overseas partners, and actively prepare students for, and support staff towards, such. In the latter respects, the predominant languages of exchange are English and the main Nordic languages. The institution is also a developing university, which can benefit from the contributions of people who are not Faroese speakers, but have relevant experience of benefit to the development of the University. This language policy reflects the requirement for the University simultaneously to address all of these needs.

The foundation of the policy is that the primary spoken and written language of the University is Faroese, whether in teaching, research, or administration, unless specific and appropriate circumstances dictate otherwise. The University will seek to ensure that the use of the Faroese language across the institution is of consistently high quality – in terms of spelling, grammar, and so on, in letters, emails, job descriptions, curricula, course descriptions, on the University website, and so on.

As already indicated, English is also of great importance to the institution and to its staff and students and the University should also seek to ensure that staff and students are supported in terms of their English competences. Moreover, as the University includes both international teachers and students, the

University will strive to ensure that all important information about the institution should also be available in English. When working with Nordic partners, for instance in Nordic projects, at conferences and during examinations, the University will encourage and support use of other Nordic languages as appropriate.

3. Implementation

To implement this language Policy and to secure a high-quality use of the Faroese language, the University of the Faroe Islands will take the following steps:

- i. The University will undertake a review of the academic language guidance and language support that is available across the University for both students and staff and will seek to identify best practices and support their wider implementation and development across the University.
- ii. Course descriptions will be catalogued and available on the University website. If the course does not follow the general rule that courses will be in Faroese, this must be pointed out in the course description. If international students follow a course in Faroese, the teacher will try to clarify the material without changing the language of teaching, or with as little change as is reasonably possible. International students may ask questions, have presentations, submit written work, and undertake examinations in their own language, or in English, according to what may be feasible.
- iii. Teaching in English and in other languages will be limited to courses that involve the teaching of other languages, courses delivered by teachers who do not have sufficient Faroese and courses delivered in another language as part of international collaborations. The University may decide to offer postgraduate programmes partially or entirely in English. For such programmes, certain minimum language proficiency requirements will typically be made for students.
- iv. Assessments will generally be held in the same language as that in which the course is primarily delivered, but this may also depend on the language competences of available examiners (including external examiners). In courses delivered in English or another language and taught by a Faroese teacher, the faculty may, on request and depending on the language competencies of all the relevant examiners, allow students to be assessed in Faroese. In courses delivered in Faroese, the faculty can allow students to write their assignments and have their exams in English or one of the Nordic languages, or in another language, according to what may be feasible and arranged with the faculty staff, also taking account of the language competences of available external examiners.
- v. Doctoral theses should be written in Faroese, where that is in accordance with the wishes of the student and the views of the faculty. Where that is not the case, another language will be chosen. The faculty and the supervisory team will in each case assess if there are sufficient independent experts in the relevant field who have adequate skills in the chosen language, to ensure sufficient availability of qualified opponents. Theses written in a language other than Faroese must include an abstract in Faroese, and theses written in Faroese must include an English abstract.
- vi. The University will aim to provide support for tuition in Faroese for non-Faroese staff, who will be able to request some partial reduction in workload to support their efforts. Non-Faroese employees of the University are expected, within a reasonable timeframe (approximately 3-4 years), to attain a reasonable proficiency in Faroese (particularly in comprehension). Faroese language competence will be an important consideration when positions, and especially permanent positions, are being filled, and the language policy of the University will be referred to in job adverts.
- vii. Faroese teachers and students are encouraged to participate in collaborations in which other languages are the primary means of exchange (e.g., Nordic languages and English). The University will work towards providing support for academic English for teachers and students, in particular for PhD students.
- viii. International students will be offered an opportunity to participate in courses and other activities in Faroese at the University where that is feasible and appropriate. International students undertaking

a course taught in Faroese may, dependent on available resources and opportunities, be offered some support towards tuition in Faroese. Exchange students may also be offered such support.

- ix. The University will take positive steps to ensure that speakers of sign language^{iv}, visually handicapped and dyslexic students and staff can be supported as well as is reasonably possible in their studies and work at the University.
- x. Academic staff will be encouraged to communicate their field of study in Faroese - in teaching, general communication in books, articles, and reviews (in Fróðskaparrit), various media, study material and so on. Translation of classic or highly influential scientific and theoretical texts into Faroese will also be encouraged and supported, within available resources.
- xi. Academic staff will be actively encouraged to promote the use and development of Faroese academic language and precise scientific terminology in Faroese and to communicate these to students and the public. Each disciplinary grouping within the University will be encouraged to collect and disseminate the relevant innovations in their field.
- xii. All meetings and other activities within all fields of study and within the administration of the University should be held in Faroese, again unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise (see section 2, above). University management and those chairing committees will seek to ensure that participants who do not sufficiently understand the language of exchange in any given context can participate in meetings and other activities as fully as is reasonably possible.
- xiii. Written material and general information from the University's administration and its faculties, for example meeting requests, minutes of meetings, invitations to lectures, advertisements for various activities, information updates, and so on, should be provided in Faroese, unless specific circumstances require otherwise, but will typically also include an English and/or Nordic text as needed. Internal or working papers may be written in English as needed.
- xiv. The University will seek to use language technology and guidance to support students and staff in their use of the Faroese language. The University will therefore seek to ensure that suitable language technology is made available, dependent on resources, particularly for staff and students who may have particular needs which can be supported by such tools.
- xv. The ICT environment of the University will be Faroese to the extent that is reasonably possible. Teachers and students will be encouraged to participate in translating open software.
- xvi. The University will have a language forum that refers to the Rector, or their nominee, and includes a representative from each faculty, the central administration, and students. This committee will collaborate with the Faroese Language Council as appropriate. The forum should from time to time advise the University Leadership Team and other staff on relevant matters, make suggestions on how to implement the language policy of the University, generally monitor its implementation, communicate relevant information to interested parties as appropriate, and evaluate the policy and its implementation as needed, to inform periodic revisions and updates.

4. Oversight and responsibility

The University administration and individual faculties, centres and institutes, as applicable, are responsible for more detailed implementation and realisation of the University of Faroe Islands' language policy. The Rector is ultimately responsible for the policy and may authorise a temporary deviation from individual provisions, as necessary.

ⁱ See the Law passed by the Løgting no. 58 as of 9. June 2008, amended by law passed by the Løgting no 51 as of 8th May 2012, § 2, and *The University of the Faroe Islands, Strategic Plan 2020-2024*.

ⁱⁱ *Málmørk* 2007:55.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The University of the Faroe Islands, Strategic Plan 2020-2024*, p.4 and p.12.

^{iv} About Sign language, see *Málmørk* 2007: 107, p2.