

1. Summary

Overall goals

The RUG language and culture policy established in March 2014 is an important instrument for RUG for economic/governance motives as well as for reasons of quality assurance and innovation. Firstly, RUG faces a decreasing number of Dutch students after 2020 and needs to attract an increasing number of international students to ensure the same budget and volume. Secondly, more diversity of students and staff will add to the quality of education and research, and to innovation if dealt with effectively. Thirdly, academic skills in English are increasingly important for citation and publication, two relevant parameters in rankings. And last but not least, we learn from research that language and culture skills are increasingly important for the employability of our students. For these purposes, all barriers in language and culture need to be removed before 2020. In addition to this language/culture policy, multiple strategies need to be applied in an integrated approach, for example in international marketing/reputation management, admissions, international classroom & learning communities, learning outcomes, and in career guidance/“employability”.

The results in 2020 should be: an innovative university, with high-quality research-based international education, with high positions in international rankings, with a high % of international students and staff, known locally, nationally and internationally for its open and inclusive environment, reflected in an adequate participation of international staff and students in governance and senior management positions, with the international character being confirmed by the acquisition of the NVAO quality label for internationalization (DFII/CeQuint).

The language and culture policy paper implies:

- a compulsory approach for English for all staff and students with a good quality control system, to be integrated in BKO/UTQ for teaching staff in English-taught programs
- a voluntarily, yet stimulating approach for Dutch for all international students and staff
- a voluntarily, yet stimulating approach for other languages to be integrated in a number of international programs and to be stimulated at an individual level
- a focus on intercultural awareness and competences, to be integrated in BKO/UTQ for teaching staff in English-taught programs.

Process

The implications of the language and culture policy in terms of training, support and implementation in the organization have been discussed in working groups with many staff and students from different levels, faculties and units. Next, the recommendations were discussed and set by the Task Force Language Policy chaired by Professor Frans Zwarts and by the Expert Group International Classroom (April-June 2014).

Overall recommendations

- demand-oriented, “fit-for-purpose” approach
- integrated approach in which language, culture and didactics are combined
- improve quality assurance system for assessing and monitoring English for staff
- establish clear, consistent entrance and exit levels of English for all English-taught programs
- define a functional level of Dutch for international staff (within specific context) and provide budget and time
- continue subsidizing Dutch language courses: available for free up to B1 level for all international students throughout the programs
- workshops/modules in intercultural competences available for students and staff
- workshops in academic skills (in English) available at low costs for students
- integrate academic skills development (in English) in international programs
- integrate a third language into a number of appropriate international programs
- extend on-line support where appropriate.

Budget

At individual level, faculties¹ should use part of their budgets assigned for the training and development of their staff for further development of English, Dutch, intercultural competences, and possibly other languages within a specific (didactical) environment. Staff members and students also have their own responsibility for their further development. Students can take extra-curricular courses in language and culture at low costs. Staff can take language and/or intercultural courses, either paid (partly) by their faculty if considered of added value to the working context, or paid (partly) by the staff member.

At program level, the faculties will submit their plans in line both with the policy and recommendations, and with the faculty’s current stage of internationalisation and strategic and measurable goals for internationalisation at faculty level. More specific criteria will be developed by the steering group in Spring 2015. If approved, the faculty plans will be paid 50% by the Board with a 50% match from the faculty.

At the institutional level, the Board (CvB) will pay for **required investments** for a proper implementation in the organization, with new systems, tools, expertise and courses to be developed and for the project organization. The Board will also continue and extend her subsidy for Dutch language courses for all international students up to B1 level, given that this is an important tool for marketing, integration and binding.

¹ Read: faculty or service department

2. Specific recommendations for implementation

Our recommendations are specified for staff (teaching and supportive) and for students, for language and for intercultural awareness and competences.

Overall principles

1. For staff

This language and culture policy implies new requirements for teaching and supportive staff, to be included in HR and UTQ policy and in the PDCA/quality assurance cycle, setting and monitoring clear quality standards. It also implies an integrated (language, culture, didactics) and tailor-made approach and a clear line of support.

2. For students

Courses & training in Dutch language up to B1 level and a workshop in multicultural awareness and competences development will be available for free, while courses in other languages and extra-curricular courses & workshops in academic skills will be available at low costs for students. If courses cannot be part of the regular programme, the extra-curricular credits will be added to the diploma or a supplement thereof (compare Honours College). For a small number of appropriate international programmes, it is recommended to integrate a third language into the programme.

3. Intercultural competences (for staff and students)

The main objective is to create more intercultural awareness and develop intercultural competences and attitude at the individual and the organisational level and provide support in learning how to deal with diversity as a resource/ i.e. communication across cultures (in specific contexts) in order to make RUG a truly international, inclusive organisation².

Please note that intercultural competences are only one tool to realise a more international university with an inclusive³ environment. There are many other factors that can either be motivators (e.g. diversity of staff and students), or obstacles for inclusiveness (e.g. “Dutchness” of institutional culture, informal rules and networks). All of these factors should be taken into account in the cultural change process of becoming an international university.

² Definition of “intercultural competence” (Bennet 2008, commonly accepted): “a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts”.

³ Core definition “inclusive”: inclusive learning and teaching in higher education refers to the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others (C. Hockings, 2010).

Recommendations for staff

1. Establish an overall quality assurance framework for assessing and monitoring (in terms of “CAN DO”/CEFR framework, Council of Europe, 2009) the English and Dutch of all staff (academic and supportive) in terms of level and competences

Responsible: HR, LC, ESI, O&S, faculties, service departments

- adapt the CEFR-related TOEPAS (Copenhagen) scales⁴ as a basis for assessment and feedback for English proficiency for academic staff
- consider including these scales in the international supplement to the UTQ/BKO criteria regarding English proficiency *alongside other instruments for the training and support of didactic and intercultural skills*
- use these scales in the observation/assessment of real teaching events, and combine with feedback based on (video) evidence
- make linguistic and intercultural proficiency a possible item in all staff development (R&O) interviews
- for non-teaching staff, make a matrix incorporating (clustered) profiles which have similar support needs⁵
- faculty boards and directors of service departments will determine the required activities for their faculty or department within the framework of the recommendations and their strategic goals, decide about assessment and lines of support, and act on evaluations.

2. Pay attention to diversity of staff (in gender, culture, educational background, etc.)

Responsible: faculties, HR, Communication Department, ESI, service departments

In development:

- create more intercultural awareness with all staff
- encourage and enable the development of Dutch for non-Dutch staff
- provide teaching staff with qualitative feedback on their performance through evaluations and observations
- create explicit opportunities to highlight and discuss language and intercultural competences and ideas for further development.

In support:

- ensure that introduction procedures provide international staff with a good insight into the working environment at RUG; be explicit about Dutch academic and local culture
- use a buddying system to provide new international staff with a ‘softer landing’ and facilitate more integration between Dutch and international staff.

3. Integrate language and intercultural competences with didactic skills in the UTQ/BKO

Responsible: ESI, HR, LC, O&S, faculties

- ESI will work with the Language Centre, O&S and HR in defining the international context, language and intercultural element for the UTQ competences and requirements. The UTQ committee will receive a proposal.
- in a transition period until 2017, new staff who start teaching in L2⁶ will be required to take the UTQ/BKO including the international supplement.

⁴ Soren Kling & Staehr, 2013

⁵ consider adapting Erasmus Rotterdam matrix to RUG organisation, see Forum 2013.

⁶ L2 stands for teaching in English as a second language.

- after 2017, the international supplement will be fully integrated in UTQ/BKO. In the context of life long learning, all staff teaching in L2 will be supported to acquire the international supplement. Staff who start teaching L2 will be assessed in the L2 as early as needed.
- Staff already certified with the UTQ in the previous years (>80% of the teaching staff will have the UTQ certificate in 2015) will be facilitated with a variety of possibilities to acquire the language and intercultural competences as part of a programme for lifelong learning.

4. Provide adequate feedback and a line of support (for English in particular)

Responsible: LC, ESI, HR, O&S, faculties, service departments

- provide support consistently across faculties and service departments
- in each faculty and service department, assign a specified unit/person to liaise with the support units
- communicate consistently about levels i.e. C1 is the lowest threshold for teaching, but ideally we want people to be more flexible in their use of language, implying C2 (and higher)
- communicate consistently that language is not the only factor that contributes to the quality of teaching (it combines with content knowledge, pedagogical skills and intercultural skills)
- use the Steinert (2010) model so faculties will be able to design their own lines of support that are 'fit for purpose', meeting the specific needs of their staff and their local context and within their organizational culture based on Can-Do statements
- ensure (through a specified person/department) that faculties and service departments liaise with the units that provide the intensive training and support e.g. Language Centre, ESI, HR (including translations, style guide and terminology database available).

5. Define a functional level of Dutch for staff (non-native speakers of Dutch), in their specific context and given their specific ambitions

Responsible: LC, faculties, ESI, service departments, staff

- enable non-Dutch staff to reach defined levels within defined periods of time e.g. 80% to reach A2 within a year, and B1 within two years
- enable further development of Dutch (B2 to C1/C2) through tailor-made communicative courses (small groups or individual) with a focus on the working context (e.g. for those needing to work or teach through Dutch)
- make consistent use of language portfolios and online materials (e.g. provide online Dutch course for potential staff before they arrive) to support staff in the ongoing development of their Dutch
- offer assessment for all non-Dutch staff interested, using intake interviews and national Dutch tests at A2-B1 (NT2 II for B2, NT2 III for C1 (under development) if more formal certification is desirable
- Offer support for international staff to attain their NT2-I
- and NT2-II (NT2-II more relevant for academic staff and PhD, especially those planning on staying more than five years)
- develop Nestor course with receptive Dutch (reading and listening) to develop from A2 to C1/C2
- provide budget and time.

6. Offer learning and support of other languages than English and Dutch plus options for on-line learning

Responsible: LC, faculties, service departments, staff

- provide staff with the opportunity to enhance skills in other languages as the professional needs arise (making budget and time available)
- encourage faculties to make structural use of the existing expertise provided by the Language Centre, including both tailor-made courses and online self-study resources such as 'Tell Me More'.

Recommendations for students

1. Continue subsidizing Dutch language courses for international students and offer those courses for free,

Responsible: LC, faculties, O&S, students

and:

- allow them to take these throughout their programme (not only in the first year)
- raise the level to B1 (so they are able to follow meetings in Dutch)
- add supplement for Dutch language to degree
- make online materials available for students for self-study
- offer online courses before they arrive in Groningen about Dutch language and Dutch culture
- offer support for international students to attain their NT2-I and NT2-II⁷.

2. Offer academic skills support, preferably curricular, otherwise extra-curricular

Responsible: LC, O&S, faculties, students

Depending on the needs (and deficiencies) of the students, they may take a workshop on these skills or they may need to take a longer course.

- Offer academic skills workshops for students during their studies (after a short pilot with 1st year students) in: 1) academic reading, 2) academic writing (i.e. spelling & style, essay writing, thesis writing), 3) academic presentations and 4) academic discussion & debate.
- Offer academic skills courses in: 1) academic reading, 2) academic writing, 3) academic presentations and 4) academic discussion & debate.

These courses are longer than the workshops and offer students more guidance and support. These can be integrated into the Bachelor and Master programmes or can be extra-curricular.

3. Create more intercultural awareness and sensitivity

Responsible: LC, SSC, faculties, students

- Offer an Intercultural workshop in the introductory week for Bachelor and Master students in international programmes. All students take the IET⁸ test and the results will be discussed in the workshop (awareness raising)
- Integrate explicit intercultural and international learning outcomes in Bachelor and Master programmes⁹. Stimulate students to collect 'evidence' of their multilingual and multicultural competences by working with an e-portfolio (Nestor, EU MAGICC project¹⁰, etc.).
- Offer extra-curricular courses for students to work on their multilingual and multicultural competences (i.e. MAGICC scenarios). Credits will be added as supplement to diploma and/or official EU MAGICC certificates.

⁷ NT2-III is more relevant for academic staff and PhD, especially those planning on staying more than five years

⁸ IET stands for Intercultural Effectiveness Tool, developed by prof. J.P. van Oudenhove and Dr. J. Hofstra (Faculty of Behavioural Sciences RUG) and provided by the LC

⁹ a generic model for international and intercultural learning outcomes is being developed in the IC project

¹⁰ MAGICC project: <http://www.unil.ch/magicc>.

4. Establish clear, consistent entrance and exit levels

Responsible: O&S, LC, faculties, students

Currently, the **entrance and exit requirements** differ per faculty per programme.

We recommend:

- ALL students, should have C1 English reading skills (needed to read academic articles written in English, 60% of the literature is in English). Those that are below this level should be stimulated to take an academic reading workshop/ course
- ALL students must have a minimum of a CEFR B2¹¹ level in the language their Bachelor programme is taught through. The students entering with the minimum level should be advised to immediately enroll in academic workshops/courses in the target language
- Students should exit their Bachelor phase with a minimum of C1 in their active proficiency levels of the language their programme is taught through, to be included in learning outcomes. Their Bachelor thesis must be minimally of C1 language level as a pre-requisite, with borderline cases and fails reviewed by a language expert
- To enter the Master Phase, students must have a minimum of a CEFR C1 level in the language their Master programme is taught through.

Overview of required entrance levels

Language of Instruction	Bachelor phase	Master phase
English ¹²	Entrance: min. B2 English, academic reading C1 Exit: min. C1 (thesis min. C1)	Entrance: C1 Exit: C1 (thesis min. C1)

5. Stimulate students to learn an additional language

Responsible: LC, faculties, students, Communication Departments

This should be done by clear and consistent communication, subsidizing costs and adding it to their degree or supplement to their degree. Offer official language tests for English, Dutch, German, French, Spanish, etc.

Recommendations for intercultural competences (for staff and students)

Responsible: faculties, service departments, communication departments, LC, ESI, HR, SSC, students, student associations, staff.

¹¹ CEFR B2 is roughly equal to VWO grade 6 .

¹² For students in a programme taught in Dutch, academic reading skills in English should be C1.

Overall

- Make the issue of cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness more visible and concrete for all staff and students at all levels; showcase international experiences close to the discipline (to make it explicit)
- The Language Centre (LC), Department for Education Support and Innovation (ESI), HR department and Student Service Centre (SSC) will together develop a more integrated offer (related to didactic and language context) of training and support in intercultural communication for both staff and students, using available tools and on-line scenarios e.g. Intercultural Effectiveness Tool and EU project MAGICC.
- **For teaching staff**, provide training and support combined with English language support and their specific didactic context, stimulate working abroad in a purposeful way relevant to the working context and stimulate participation in international academic networks. ¹³
- **For support staff**, define the specific required intercultural competences for specific (categories of) functions (e.g. policy advisors, senior management, desk staff, secretaries) based on e.g. scenarios from EU MAGICC project, combined with English language requirements and develop a line of support. Stimulate working abroad in a purposeful way relevant to the working context.
- **For students**, integrate intercultural competences in (a selection of) international programmes in a systematic way, combined with the development of academic skills and language learning, starting with specific international learning outcomes and a vision on internationalisation at programme level¹⁴. In addition, provide extra-curricular tools and scenarios for students to test and develop their intercultural communication skills at low cost¹⁵.

¹³ e.g. make use of EU Erasmus Plus programme including funding opportunities, for all staff

¹⁴ refer to IC framework developed in international classroom project

¹⁵ e.g. Intercultural Effectiveness Tool, on-line scenarios from EU project MAGICC.

Recommendations for management and administration¹⁶

Responsible: communication departments, legal department, faculties, service departments.

In management and administration, Dutch is the primary language at RUG, in accordance with Dutch society in general, while English is the secondary language. This implies that RUG is managed and administered in Dutch (both internally and in relation to the Dutch authorities). Yet, given the dual plus policy, the university should also:

- communicate in English in all governance bodies at central and faculty level to ensure transparency and equal access for all staff and students (**from academic year 2015/2016 onwards**)
- communicate both in Dutch and English in such a way as to ensure that staff and students are in a position to perform their functions in the organisation regardless of linguistic and cultural background
- ensure that students and staff who are not (yet/sufficiently) proficient in Dutch are able to communicate with relevant supportive staff in English
- ensure that communication regarding the rights and duties of staff and students are available both in Dutch and in English
- ensure that the legal procedures of lodging a complaint, objection or appeal are equally accessible for non-Dutch students as they are for Dutch students
- ensure that formal, written communication in letters/emails/documents is available both in Dutch and in English
- ensure that communication on the RUG website with relevance for non-Dutch speaking students, staff members and/or their internal or external audiences is available in English.

Overall recommendations

1. To fully implement this language policy (internal and external) in management and administration) before the academic year 2016/2017
2. To create internal and external awareness through marketing and communication among staff and students and other stakeholders about the “inclusive dual plus” language policy. The overall message is that on the one hand RUG wants to ensure high quality and an inclusive environment by setting clear criteria, while on the other hand enabling and facilitating staff and students
3. To provide information about the language conditions for students and staff and the opportunities to learn Dutch, English and other languages.
To be included in brochures, websites etc.

To examine the possibilities for language support in legal procedures of non-Dutch students.

¹⁶ RUG language policy paper, April 2014, page 16.