



RECTOR'S DECISION (TRANSLATION)
15.2.2019

Dnro: 24/0.005/2019

Policy for the Use of Finnish and English (Personnel)

The principles of language use have been discussed at a meeting of the University's Steering Group (7 January 2019).

The policy will be kept up to date and reviewed as needed. The updated policy can be accessed at any time on the intranet Navi community *Kielelliset toimintaperiaatteet – Language Policy*. The policy does not cover procedures related to language use in education and research.

As per the Finnish Universities Act, the official language of instruction and degrees and the language of administration of the University of Vaasa is Finnish. In addition to Finnish-language degrees, the University of Vaasa offers several English-language degree programmes at master's and doctoral levels. The number of international students and researchers at the University has increased significantly in recent years.

In accordance with the University's equality and non-discrimination plan, the aim is to provide everyone with equal opportunities to participate in the University community's activities, irrespective of their nationality or linguistic background.

In practice, the University of Vaasa's working languages are Finnish and English. In addition, the strong multilingual profile of the Vaasa region, particularly the status of the Swedish language, is taken into account at the University, for example in communications and stakeholder dialogue. Tritonia Academic Library, an affiliate institution of the University of Vaasa, operates in three languages by providing library and information services and digital teaching development services in Finnish, Swedish and English.

University guidelines, news releases and notices

The University's guidelines and news releases are always drawn up in both Finnish and English. The main rule is that all notices and messages posted to the personnel mailing list are also written in both languages. This ensures that all members of the University community have equal opportunities to receive information about what is happening at the University and to join in the discussion. Besides promoting equality, this procedure ensures that terminology and



new titles related to decisions and guidelines are up to date and have been confirmed in both languages.

For practical reasons, there may be situations in which both language versions of official documents cannot be published at the same time. In this case, the missing version should be published within a reasonable time frame (preferably within a week). Sometimes the subject of a news release is such that creating the English version is dependent on an external organisation (such as the Ministry of Education and Culture or Finnish Education Employers) and the University cannot influence the translation schedule. If a decision is made to only provide information in Finnish or English (for example, if the matter is only relevant to some personnel groups), it should be briefly noted in the other language what the subject is and why information is given in one language.

Decisions

Since the administrative language of the University of Vaasa is Finnish, decisions are drawn up in Finnish (rector's decision, vice-rector's decision, decisions of deans and directors).

If a decision is not translated into English in full, an English-language summary is nonetheless created of it. Appendices of a decision are not translated into English unless they directly involve the University's personnel or are connected to international degree programmes. English-language appendices of a decision are not translated into Finnish.

The Finnish-language decision takes precedence over the English-language translation, and in case of any disputes, the interpretation is made according to the Finnish-language decision. Only the Finnish-language decision is signed.

Decisions concerning private persons are drawn up in Finnish only (e.g. a dean's decision on upholding the right to study). However, if a decision concerns persons who do not know Finnish, also an English-language translation is created of the decision.

Intranet Navi

The University's intranet Navi includes all decisions and guidelines related to the University and descriptions of the units. Each unit has its own intranet community, and there are also several other communities and wiki pages on the intranet. Navi enables up-to-date communication and real-time commenting on materials.

In general, all shared Navi communities and wikis, particularly the guidelines created by University Services, are drawn up in both Finnish and English. The header of a wiki page is



always written in both languages, with a dash between the Finnish and English header. Wiki pages are first written in Finnish. A link to the English version is created below the header. If a wiki page is only drawn up in one language, the page administrator should write at least a summary in the other language, including the main points of the text.

Each unit and author of a community is responsible for the content created for Navi and for keeping it up to date. The unit / community administrator is also responsible for providing the other language version.

University meetings and personnel events

University meetings

The following linguistic principles apply to all meetings mentioned in the University's regulations (the University's Board, all management groups, the council of research and education and all official working groups set up separately):

- The University's language of administration is Finnish, and the agendas of meetings are drawn up in Finnish. English may also be used as a language of discussion.
- The chair decides on whether interpretation or translation is needed during a meeting.
- Meeting documents are not translated (from Finnish into English or vice versa). All members should ensure before a meeting that they have a sufficient understanding of the matters at hand, regardless of the language used in the documents. Where necessary, members can go through the matters before the meeting with the case handler or the secretary or chair of the meeting.
- Finnish-language minutes are drawn up of all meetings, and the minimum requirement is that an English-language summary is created of all matters on the agenda and the decisions made. The author of the minutes is responsible for writing the summary.

University briefings and employee information sessions

- The University's briefings are bilingual (Finnish and English). Speakers should always take both language groups into consideration during presentations. If this principle is not followed, the speaker should make sure that the language of the background presentation is different from the language of oral presentation. In other words, if a presentation is given in Finnish, the background presentation (such as a slide show) should be in English and vice versa.
- For particularly weighty reasons, the organiser of a briefing may decide on arranging for interpretation. The University has the necessary equipment for simultaneous interpretation, and the interpretation booths are at the back of the Levón auditorium.



Personnel training

- Personnel training events organised by HR Services take both language groups into consideration, so that at least one of the training or information sessions is always held in English. The general principle is that a training event is held if at least six people have registered for it.
- The self-assessment section of the language survey for the University of Vaasa personnel conducted in spring 2018 showed that a vast majority of the personnel (more than 85%) have an excellent or good command of English. If there are participants in a training event with insufficient knowledge of Finnish, the event may sometimes be held only in English for practical reasons (such as cost efficiency), in accordance with the principle of affirmative action.
- The University's Induction Programme is always held in English if the participants include members of personnel who do not know Finnish. In addition to time-related reasons, this is important from the perspective of integration. An opportunity to participate in joint events, such as personnel training, has a significant impact on integration into the workplace. This is particularly important at the early stages of the career, when employees do not yet have their own professional and social networks within the University community.

Recruitment and language skills of personnel

When the University of Vaasa recruits personnel to permanent positions or fixed-term positions lasting more than three years, the language skills required should be specified at the latest when writing the job description. This concerns both Finnish and English. The level of language proficiency should be defined in accordance with the European Framework of Reference and its proficiency levels A1 to C2. Alternatively, reference can be made to levels 1 to 6 of the Finnish National Certificates of Language Proficiency.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages:

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/sites/default/files/cefr-en.pdf>

Assessment of language proficiency in recruitment

During the recruitment process, a person can demonstrate their language proficiency, for example, in a job interview, by providing a certificate of language skills, as part of teaching demonstration or in a separate interview to assess language proficiency. The language skills required for teaching and research positions in accordance with the *Government Decree on Universities* (Valtioneuvoston asetus yliopistoista, 770/2009) can be demonstrated by



completing school education or a university degree in the relevant language. A certificate of language skills issued by another Finnish institute of higher education is also an acceptable demonstration of language skills. The Dean or the director of the unit decides on a case-by-case basis how the language proficiency level required for a given position is verified.

Where necessary, *Language Centre Linginno* can support in assessing the language skills of applicants when positions are filled. Applicants participate in a separate assessment of language proficiency (about 30 minutes per applicant), covering both written language and communication skills and oral communication skills.

A person appointed to a position at the University must have the kind of education, experience and language proficiency that are needed in order to be successful in the position in question. These requirements are specified for each position before the appointment process begins.

Finnish proficiency

- The aim is that all persons recruited to the University achieve at least level A2 (basic user) in Finnish within four years of their recruitment. Although this level is not enough for teaching or performing demanding administrative tasks, it contributes greatly to integration into the workplace and living environment and active participation.
- If the person's job description includes or will presumably include demanding administrative tasks, such as working in a management group, it is recommended that the person achieve at least level B1 or B2 (independent user) in Finnish within a certain time frame. This is also the level that the Finnish Immigration Service requires from people applying for Finnish citizenship. Level B1/B2 users understand, for example, text related to their work, particularly when they are familiar with the context.

English proficiency

- The expectations for English skills depend on the position. The general rule is that in all positions, the persons to be recruited should achieve at least level A2 (basic user) in English.
- Most of the University positions are such that a level of independent language user (at least B1/B2) is required. The University's employees should, for example, understand questions asked in English and be able to communicate orally or in writing about their job.
- Director and manager positions as well as other University Services positions require a level of proficient user (C1 or C2), unless there are special reasons why a lower level is sufficient.



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- Teaching and research positions in which fluency is needed in order to successfully perform the duties also require a level of proficient user (C1 or C2).

University support for personnel

The University supports personnel in meeting the linguistic principles by providing regular language training in Finnish and English and offering translation (and interpretation) services.