

# Code of Conduct Regarding the Language of Instruction at the University of Antwerp

Board of Governors, 23 April 2013, 27 May 2014, 31 March 2015, 12 April 2016, 28 March 2017, 27 March 2018, 26 March 2019, 31 March 2020, 30 March 2021, 29 March 2022, 28 March 2023 and 26 March 2024.

## Basic principles

Within the framework of her internationalisation strategy, the University of Antwerp wishes to make the following well-considered and balanced choices in relation to the use of languages of instruction.

- Per programme and per course, one has to consider the most appropriate language of instruction. In doing this, one has to take into account the position and the importance of Dutch as a language for scientific research and academic education on the one hand and the objectives in relation to internationalisation on the other hand.

The quality of the programme is always the main concern. This means that all teaching staff and all the academic staff having a teaching assignment need to adequately master the language in which they teach. The lecturer's knowledge of the language of instruction needs to be tested and if necessary a possibility for remediation is to be offered. In accordance with the legal stipulations this means that lecturers have to master the language at ERK-level C1.

- With a view to maximum accessibility of higher education for local students on the one hand and to obtaining a sound scientific basic knowledge in Dutch on the other hand, at bachelor level Dutch programmes are chosen. With a view to student exchange and the development of multilingualism for all students it is possible to offer programme components in other languages in these Dutch bachelor's programmes, within the legally determined boundaries and taking into account the points of attention listed in the appendix. It is preferable not to offer courses in another language in the first year of a Dutch bachelor's programme.
- At master level, the language of instruction is chosen with a view to the maximum added value in relation to the type, the contents and the target group of the programme. Dutch remains the standard language in education but for each programme one has to consider if there are enough reasons to make an exception. It is first of all up to the faculties and the institutions to make this consideration. For each master's and advanced master's programme a conscious choice is to be made and this choice - for Dutch or for another language - has to be motivated using the points of attention listed in the appendix.

# TITLE I: LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: GENERAL RULES AND EXCEPTIONS

## Article 1. Education and Examination Regulation

The present document lays down the rules that apply within the University of Antwerp with regard to the language of instruction and examination, in accordance with the stipulations by the Flemish lawmaker (Structure Decree, Flexibilisation Decree, Mini Decree; Decree on the Integration of academic programmes of university colleges into the universities). These rules are an integral part of the Education and Examination Regulation.

## Article 2: Dutch is the language of instruction

Dutch is the administrative language of the University of Antwerp. In the initial programmes leading to a Bachelor's or a Master's degree, the language of instruction and examination is Dutch, save for the exceptions mentioned below.

## Article 3: Language requirements for initial enrolment (Dutch)

The management of the institution is entitled to make admission to a first enrolment for a Dutch-language programme dependent upon proof that the student has either

- 1° passed a Dutch-language test recognised by the institution, and provided by a university, a university college or other organisation;
- 2° successfully completed at least one year in Dutch-language secondary education;
- 3° passed or been declared successful for a Dutch-language higher-education programme consisting of one or more programme components and representing a total study load of at least 60 credits.

## Article 4: Language requirements for first enrolment (other language)

If, by way of one of the exceptions below, a programme is instructed in a language other than Dutch, then the management of the institution is entitled to make admission to a first enrolment for that programme dependent upon proof of adequate competency in the language of instruction.

## Article 5: Determination of the language of instruction

The language of instruction of each programme component is determined by the faculty.

## Article 6: Language of the study material

The study material for programmes instructed in Dutch should preferably be in Dutch. However, the lecturer is free to select other than Dutch-language study material for scientific, educational and/or quality-related reasons.

## Article 7: Exceptions to Art. 2.

Exception to the principle formulated under Art. 2 at programme level

Initial bachelor's and master's programmes in another language can be offered if these are designed specifically for foreign students or if the added value for the students and the job market and the functionality for the programme can be adequately proven. This is only possible if there is an equivalent programme offered in the Flemish community where the student can follow the training programme fully in Dutch. A programme in another language can request an exemption from the equivalence requirement.

Initial bachelor's and master's programmes in another language can be offered freely if it concerns training programmes that are designed specifically within the framework of the International Course Programme of development aid for foreign students, or if it concerns initial bachelor's or master's programmes that have

been selected in accordance with the stipulations of a European programme for the promotion of international collaboration in higher education aiming at multi or joint degrees.

Exceptions to the principle formulated under Art. 2 at programme component level:

- 1° programme components where the object of study is a foreign language;
- 2° programme components which are instructed by foreign-speaking visiting lecturers;
- 3° foreign-language programme components which, with the permission of the university administration, are taken at another institution of higher education;
- 4° programme components for which the university administration has decided that they may be instructed in another language on condition that the added value for the students and for the functionality of the programme be apparent from the explicitly motivated decision.

## Article 8: The examination language

Apart from the exceptions specified below under 1° and 2°, exams shall be taken in Dutch. When the programme component is instructed in a different language and there is no equivalent programme component instructed in Dutch within the programme, the student has the right to take the exam in Dutch. In such an event, the student should inform the course titular(s) before 1 December for programme components of the first semester and before 1 April for programme components of the second semester. This regulation does not apply to initial Bachelor's and Master's programmes in another language.

- 1° The faculty may compel the student to take the exam for programme components specified under 1° and 3° of art. 7 in the foreign language of instruction.
- 2° The faculty may grant permission to exchange students to take exams in a foreign language.

Within the list of courses that give substance to active pluralism, the Dutch courses are considered to be equivalent to the English course and students do not have the possibility to take the exam of the English course in Dutch.

## Article 9: Information for the benefit of the student

The available study guide specifies the language of instruction of each programme component expressly.

# TITLE II: INITIAL BACHELOR'S PROGRAMMES

## Article 10: Size of the programme components package offered in a different language

In the Bachelor's programmes, the use of a different language of instruction from Dutch is restricted to maximum 18,33% of the total of the courses offered in the model path of that programme, expressed in credits. Moreover, in the calculation of the maximum of 18,33%, types 1° and 3° as mentioned under Article 7 are not taken into account.

## Article 11: Foreign language programme components in Ba1

In the first model path of at least 54 and up to 66 credits of the Bachelor's programme, it is preferable not to offer programme components in another language as stated under 4° of Art. 7.

## TITLE III: INITIAL MASTER'S PROGRAMMES

### Article 12: Size of the programme components package offered in a different language

In the initial Master's programmes, the use of a different language of instruction from Dutch is restricted to maximum 50% of the total of the courses offered in the model path of that programme, expressed in credits. This rule does not apply to exchange students. Moreover, in the calculation of the maximum of 50%, types 1° and 3° as mentioned under Article 7 are not taken into account.

### Article 13: The Master's Project

- 1° The student writes the written part of the Master's Project in Dutch.
- 2° If the object of study of the Master's thesis is a foreign language, then the faculty may stipulate that it should be written or defended in that language.
- 3° With a view to the added value of the master's project in the framework of the learning outcomes of the programme, the faculty may grant permission for a Master's thesis in a Dutch-language programme to be written in a language other than Dutch. In such a case, a Dutch summary is mandatory.

## TITLE IV: POST-INITIAL AND OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES

### Article 14: Language of instruction

The institution is free to choose the language of instruction for:

- 1° Master's programmes that are open exclusively to persons who have already obtained a Master's degree (Advanced Master programmes);
- 2° all educational or other study activities within the framework of postgraduate training or continuing education programmes.

## TITLE V: QUALITY CARE WITH REGARD TO THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

### Article 15: Quality care in respect of the lecturer

- 1° Each foreign speaking Tenured Academic Staff member (ZAP) who doesn't teach programme components in Dutch should master Dutch at ERK-level B2. A formal rule to this effect will be incorporated in the ZAP-statute.
- 2° If lecturers are instructing programme components in a language other than their native tongue, the administration of the institution will make sure that the lecturers adequately master this language of instruction. In accordance with the legal stipulations this means that the lecturers should master the language of instruction at ERK-level C1. A formal rule to this effect will be incorporated in the personnel statutes of the academic staff.
- 3° The education committees and the faculties motivate the use of an instructional language using the points of attention listed in the appendix.

## **TITLE VI: REPORTING**

### **Article 16: Reporting**

In accordance with the Structure Decree, the institution reports annually to the Flemish Authorities on the language policy pursued at the institution, and specifically on the manner in which the relevant stipulations of the decree have been adhered to.

## APPENDIX

### List with points of attention in choosing the language of instruction for specific programmes (master) or specific programme components (bachelor or master)

This list wants to fix the points of attention that the institution takes into account in choosing the language for either specific programmes or programme components at bachelor or master level. Systematic language evaluation using these points of attention and the direction they mainly point in, should result in well-founded, motivated decisions regarding the language of programmes en programme components. The education committees and the faculty boards explicit the way they deal with the use of languages of instruction. They aim to have the highest possible level of quality when designing new programmes.

#### Contents

- Which language of instruction is most appropriate to transfer the specific contents and competences of the programme?
- Are the learning materials and the specialist literature related to the programme mainly available in Dutch or in one or more other languages?
- Is scientific research in the subject area mainly done in Dutch or in another language?
- If another language of instruction is chosen, does this offer added value as to contents to Dutch students within the subject area concerned?

#### Target group

- Does the target group of the programme consist mainly of Dutch or foreign-speaking students? Would the accessibility of the programme in question be jeopardized for the target group(s) by using (a) language(s) of instruction other than Dutch?
- Do the (prospective) students have enough mastery of the proposed language(s) of instruction? Is there sufficient support available in case the actual knowledge is inadequate?
- Does the University of Antwerp have certain advantages in the subject area that make enrolment in the programme especially attractive to foreign students (specific educational or research strengths, infrastructure, geographical and/or cultural environment, ...)?
- What are the characteristics of the “market” on which the university enters with this programme? Which amount of study fees is the local, respectively the international target group prepared to pay for such a programme?

#### Job market

- Which specific language competences does the job market expect from graduates of the programme?
- Does the programme lead to one or more specific professions in which the use of either Dutch or other languages is common and/or required?

#### Lecturers

- Do the lecturers master the proposed language(s) of instruction sufficiently? Is there sufficient support available in case the actual knowledge is inadequate?
- Are there foreign speaking academic staff members within the subject area, or would it be useful to attract them in the future?
- Does using foreign lecturers result in a bigger added value to the subject area concerned?

### **Social embedding and connection**

- Do the professional objectives and the social connection of the programme at local, regional or global level entail specific language requirements for students and lecturers of the programme? To what extent does interculturalism play an important role in the subject area concerned?