

# The Language Policy of the University of Akureyri

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The language policy of the University of Akureyri and its implementation plan are based on the following sources:

Interviews with Deans of Faculties at the University of Akureyri

Interviews with administrators of other Icelandic universities

An attitude survey among all academic staff and students at the University of Akureyri

The language policy of the University of Iceland

Documents relating to the language policies of several foreign universities

## **Article 1: The dual role of the University**

- a) Firstly, the university must fulfil its commitments to Icelandic society regarding instruction and the creation and communication of knowledge. The requirement must be made of both the university and its staff that they should show a good example regarding the use, teaching and development of the Icelandic language and strengthen wherever possible their contribution to Icelandic culture.
- b) Secondly, it is of vital importance to enhance the role of the university in international affairs, e.g. by participation in cooperative projects with foreign universities and educational institutions, student and teacher exchange schemes and by ensuring that the university contributes to academic work and the creation of knowledge in other countries. To ensure that the University of Akureyri be able to carry out its work in research and teaching, it is imperative that the use of languages at the university should support and reflect this dual role.

## **Article 2: Commitments to Icelandic society**

To fulfil commitments to its own society, the university shall seek to strengthen the use of the Icelandic language as far as possible in all aspects of its academic activities. In this regard, the students must know and understand scientific terms in Icelandic and, where the course involved is taught in English or another foreign language, special emphasis should be placed on learning and being able to use the Icelandic equivalents, as staff and students will be required at some point to talk or write about their own discipline in Icelandic. In this way they will support the instructional role of the university within its own society. Special attention should be paid to quality of language use in students' final assignments to ensure that their work is of a high standard and clearly presented.

## **Article 3: Icelandic as the official language**

As the University of Akureyri operates within Icelandic society, and in an Icelandic-speaking environment, it is natural that Icelandic should be registered as the official language of the university. Accordingly, all original documents that the university produces must be in Icelandic, whereas all others issued in a foreign language are to be regarded as translations. Should any linguistic disputes arise, the Icelandic original is to be regarded as the valid version. Administrative meetings should, under normal circumstances, be conducted in Icelandic, but, if for some reason, circumstances necessitate the use of English or any other foreign language; this must be clearly stated in the notice to attend. It is expected of all permanently employed academic staff from abroad that they make the effort to learn Icelandic and the University of Akureyri will

provide assistance in this regard. Permanently employed academic staff who do not have Icelandic as their mother tongue shall, within 5 years, have achieved sufficient proficiency in Icelandic to be able to take part in everyday communication and conversations, attend meetings and acquaint themselves with information in Icelandic issued by the university's administration.

#### **Article 4: Active participation in international cooperation**

Successful participation in international projects depends first and foremost upon English and other foreign languages (e.g. the Scandinavian languages) playing a strong role within the university. A sufficient choice of courses in English must be ensured (even entire study programmes, especially at postgraduate level) to cover the requirements of exchange students, and Icelandic academic staff should be given the opportunity to teach courses in English. This would, *inter alia*, help to boost the language ability and confidence of the teachers involved, as well as training the students to understand and express themselves in a foreign language. When teaching in English, just as in Icelandic, strict standards are maintained with regard to correctness and quality of language use.

The University of Akureyri emphasises the importance of academic staff being able to express themselves in more than one language with regard to their field of expertise, since bilingual language use leads to a broader perception of the discipline in question and sharpens the understanding of those terms and concepts under discussion. The fundamental rule applies with regard to interaction between Icelandic and English at the university that teachers should use English alongside, but not instead of, Icelandic.

The University of Akureyri benefits from varied language skills among its staff, e.g. those who have studied abroad, outside the English-speaking world, as well as staff members from other countries who bring to the university their various native languages. Such diverse linguistic skills are of high value to the university and encourage a wider spectrum in international cooperation than a knowledge of English alone could provide.

#### **Article 5: Language support by the university**

An important contribution of the university in support of language use, particularly with regard to Icelandic and English, would consist in providing extensive linguistic assistance to the university staff in almost all facets of their work.

The university offers courses in Icelandic language and culture for its permanent staff from abroad.

#### **Article 6: Responsibility, administration and implementation**

The rector bears the responsibility for the language policy of the University of Akureyri, while the faculties play an administrative role and oversee the implementation of the policy.

## **Implementation:**

1. The University of Akureyri seeks ways to offer language support for its staff, e.g. with regard to proofreading, translations and courses. It is the aim of the university that its academic staff demonstrate exemplary language use, whether this be with respect to Icelandic, English or other languages.
2. The University of Akureyri offers its staff from abroad courses in Icelandic language and culture. The possibility will be investigated of cooperation with the University of Iceland with regard to study materials and courses in Icelandic and Icelandic culture, designed for academic staff from abroad. A particular study will be made as to whether the course IcelandicOnline could benefit the University of Akureyri in a similar way as it has the University of Iceland, i.e. using individually oriented course materials with the help of a local instructor. It is important that such a course should be on offer to staff free of charge and that they can conduct their studies during daytime working hours or at a time most convenient to them.
3. The University of Akureyri encourages increased teacher and student exchanges. Students are particularly encouraged to take advantage of offers to study abroad for a period of time, in accordance with contracts entered into by the University of Akureyri with universities abroad.
4. The University of Akureyri offers courses in Icelandic language and culture for exchange students from abroad.
5. The University of Akureyri contributes to improved knowledge regarding intercultural communication and cultural differences. With a view to this aim, the university assumes a leading position in enhancement and innovation of study and teaching methods in this field as well as encouraging the participation of teachers and students in international cooperation.
6. The University of Akureyri encourages its staff in the publication of research reports and articles in Icelandic as well as in English or other languages. This helps to fulfil the university's dual role with regard to the Icelandic community and international context.
7. Faculties introduce the language policy of the University of Akureyri to new staff members, including options of language support on offer. Courses in Icelandic and Icelandic culture are to be particularly promoted among permanent staff from abroad.
8. University faculties ensure that Icelandic students acquire academic terms in Icelandic with regard to their studies, whether those studies are conducted in Icelandic or in English.
9. University faculties emphasise to their students that all final dissertations must be linguistically correct and appropriate, in whichever language they may be written.