

Language Policy

Type of document	Policy
Approved by	President
Date of approval	2021-03-25
Ref. no.	SU FV-1.1.2-1811-20
Period of validity	2021-03-25 until further notice
Replaces document	Language policy of Stockholm University, dnr SU 209-1772-10, approved 2011-09-29.
Responsible administrative unit	Office of the President
Responsible administrator	Hanna Sveen

Description:

The aim of the language policy is to provide overall guidance regarding language use at Stockholm University. The policy consists of four position statements, and the target audience is academic and administrative staff.

Disclaimer: In case of a discrepancy between the Swedish and the English version of the decision, the Swedish version will prevail.

1. Introduction and aim

Language is a necessary tool for education, research, third-stream activities and administration, and a prerequisite for the development and dissemination of knowledge. Language skills facilitate understanding and dialogue, and proficiency in several languages fosters creative thinking and community-building. For Stockholm University to be rooted in society and to be internationally competitive, proficiency in several languages among the staff is required, in Swedish and English as well as other languages.

The purpose of the language policy is to promote efficient internal and external communication, and the target audience is staff at Stockholm university. It consists of four position statements relating to all activities at the university. The aspects considered in the statements are: multilingualism and parallel language use, the role of Swedish, plain language and finally, that these aspects should be part of the cycle of strategic planning and evaluation.

2. Position statements

2.1 Stockholm University is a multilingual university

Multilingual students and staff are able to contribute to the knowledge-based society, internationally as well as nationally. A common goal for the European Union is that all its citizens know two languages in addition to their mother tongue. Further, the Nordic Council of Ministers advocates that Swedish, Danish and Norwegian should be used in Nordic cooperation. Similarly, Stockholm University encourages the use of other languages than Swedish and English when relevant, for instance in certain third-stream activities, recruitments, and for the dissemination of research.

The role of English as a 'lingua franca', a common language, not the least for research and education, is well established, globally as well as at the university. Therefore, Stockholm University strives for the parallel use of Swedish and English in order to be an attractive workplace for both national and international staff and students, and thus function as a global centre of knowledge.

Academic staff and students at the university should have the English skills needed to participate in an international research setting. Further, Swedish-speaking academic staff and students also have a responsibility to use and develop Swedish as a scientific language. The ambition of the parallel use of Swedish and English for education will involve conscious efforts of combining international elements with work of developing Swedish terminology.

The parallel use of languages is also a goal for the university administration. Important documents such as governing documents and decisions should have both Swedish and English



versions. Similarly, information about Stockholm university for prospective staff and students should be available in both languages.

Finally, the university has a particular responsibility for protecting and promoting the national minority languages Finnish, Yiddish, Miänkieli, Romany Chib and Sami, as well as Swedish sign language. Thus, staff at the university should be aware of the rights of minority language speakers and Swedish Sign Language speakers, such as the right to sign language interpretation.

2.2 Swedish is the principal language at Stockholm University

According to the Language Act, Swedish is the principal language in Sweden, meaning the common language in society that everyone has access to and that is to be useable in all areas of society. Therefore, Swedish must be the principal language in formal contexts such as decision-making, where the Swedish wording takes precedence over translations. However, important documents such as regulations, education plans, course plans, minutes, and decisions should be translated to English and/or other languages when needed.

In addition, the university has a particular responsibility for the use and development of Swedish in education and research, although the choice of language in such contexts must be allowed greater variation depending on factors such as research traditions and target audiences. Even the working language for education and research may vary according to circumstances. Nevertheless, for collegial work, a good command of Swedish is necessary, which is why all staff should be given opportunities to master Swedish to the extent that their work situation requires.

Finally, since Swedish government agencies have a special responsibility for using, developing and making Swedish terminology accessible in their various areas of expertise, the university encourages its staff, foremost researchers with good knowledge of Swedish, to contribute to the development and use of Swedish terminology.

2.3 Stockholm University promotes the use of cultivated, simple and comprehensible language



The language used at Stockholm University should be cultivated, simple and comprehensible, what is also known as plain language. Effective communication benefits from plain language, and well-written texts add to the university's good reputation. Plain language can be summarized as:

- adjusting to the target audience;
- having an appropriate structure;
- being clear and comprehensible;
- being accessible, inclusive and respectful

Especially in a higher education setting, the first aspect is worth emphasizing, since what is considered clear and comprehensible language may vary between contexts to a great extent. All staff are expected to use a plain language in speech and writing, adjusted to the context and to the audience.

2.4 Language work is a part of the strategic planning and evaluation cycle at Stockholm University

At Stockholm University, language questions should be an integral part of the strategic planning and evaluation cycle of the operations, and seen as part of the quality work, in order to raise awareness about language questions. For instance, the language policy should be made known throughout the university.

Further, it needs to be clear for staff at Stockholm University where to turn for support and help regarding language questions, language skills development and translations, as well as sign language interpretation and subtitling of recorded material.