Arqus Language Policy

2023

Introduction

The Arqus Alliance aspires to ensure truly multilingual environments at partner universities by using its language diversity to promote multilingualism and pluriculturalism throughout the universities' activities – for the entire community and beyond. The University of Granada, the University of Graz, Leipzig University, Université de Lyon 1, Maynooth University, the University of Minho, the University of Padua, Vilnius University and the University of Wrocław are committed to the following Language Policy Document for a Multilingual European University:

Language is not only the medium of teaching and learning for all subjects, it also plays a central role in the process of cognition itself. Research findings are (also) developed, understood and imparted using language, and in all subjects knowledge and skills are taught and acquired via language. In this respect, language is required for learning. Successful participation in education processes requires that students have the requisite language skills needed for their subject. Language is as such a central component of learning. In the course of their studies, students come into contact with new academic genres and modes of expression. This allows students to continuously expand their repertoire of academic and subject-specific language. With appropriate language skills, students will succeed in completing their studies and be more likely to achieve success in their career choice.

Language and culture are inextricably linked. University studies must therefore introduce students to a variety of subject-specific and academic cultures. Students should be equipped to participate confidently in various academic discourses and on this basis be trained to become competent decision-makers. This includes the commitment to European values such as respect, democracy and solidarity.

The Multilingual University has a local dimension. A knowledge and appreciation of other languages and cultures, as well as a thriving partnership with other European universities allow the members of the Multilingual University to develop a European identity. They see themselves as European in their local environment. The Multilingual University has a European dimension. Coming from diverse academic cultures and academic languages, we have the opportunity to look at fields of research and teaching from different perspectives. Such diversity is the basis and an asset for academic exchange and full participation in advancement. The Multilingual University has a global dimension.

The diversity of the cultures and languages of the world are a unique treasure. They constitute educational resources that apply to all disciplines and universities as a whole. Intercultural understanding, fruitful exchange, mutual complementarity and dialogue regarding values can only take place on the basis of awareness and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity.

The above assumptions bring us to five fields of action.

1.   Language and intercultural skills as assets for academic and professional success

Students and graduates should have the language skills they need to succeed at all points of their academic career. It is therefore essential to assess language skills at different stages, offer high-quality language and intercultural education, and certify language and cultural skills. As well as the regular course offerings, support structures should be in place to ensure that students acquire key language skills. Furthermore, digital formats promoting language learning and multilingualism should be central within the Arqus Alliance. Finally, special emphasis should be placed on preparing students and staff to participate in international subject-specific discourses.

2.   High quality language and content courses

Arqus recognises that language skills and intercultural components are essential in providing high-quality language and content courses. Language teaching staff and academic staff should have the necessary competences to teach and communicate effectively in their respective languages. To this end, staff should be supported in attaining the required levels and improving their overall language proficiency, both financially and through effective programmes, including language courses, Teaching in English initiatives, and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) workshops and courses. Language support should also be provided as a means of attracting and retaining

highly qualified staff. Furthermore, course content should be reviewed regularly, and it is recommended that degree programmes offer courses which focus on the language skills required for academic purposes. Quality assurance programmes should be in place to ensure that high-quality courses and teaching are being offered.

3. Multilingualism and pluriculturalism as educational goals

Programmes and activities that contribute to internationalism, multilingualism and pluriculturalism should be emphasised. These may include, for example, support for language courses, degree programmes in languages other than the language of the home university, and inclusion of multilingualism and pluriculturalism among the graduate attributes (competencies that every student must acquire before graduation). Subject-independent, intercultural and language skills should be promoted through a wide range of accessible language courses and programmes. There should be adequate opportunity for university members to engage in dialogue with international contacts such as international activities, projects, networks and research groups where multilingualism and pluriculturalism can be experienced first-hand. Furthermore, regionally relevant languages within the Arqus Alliance should be actively researched and promoted through research projects as well as language courses, degree programmes and associations for less commonly taught languages, all of which should also focus on intercultural elements. Most importantly, the Arqus Alliance sees language and cultural diversity as an asset and therefore outlines this in official documents and supports activities and programmes that promote multilingualism and pluriculturalism.

4. Strengthening multilingual administrative and support structures

It is essential that administrative staff have appropriate language and intercultural skills and satisfy minimum proficiency levels. In general, it is important for staff to know and understand different university systems and cultures, especially when working directly with international students and staff. In addition, multilingual information, administrative documents, websites and procurement processes are essential to attract staff and international students. To support multilingual and multicultural communication within the Alliance, terminology should be consistent and clear, making use of a common terminological database. Finally, multilingual administrative and support structures such as advisory services, translation services, language centres, quality assurance offices and continuing education programmes can ensure that students and staff are supported in their studies and work and receive and provide high-quality education.

5. Using inclusive, gender-neutral and non-discriminatory language

University guidelines should include information about inclusive language use, and awareness of inclusive language should be promoted by Alliance universities through seminars and courses, through visibility on university websites and documentation, and by creating and supporting specialised offices. Support and advisory services can provide assistance regarding language use in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner. In addition, information should be accessible to all through multilingual texts and videos, subtitles, sign language, Braille/text-reading applications, the use of "easy language", pictogrammes and interpretation. Arqus is firmly committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusion and to eliminating barriers of all kinds in order to make higher education, and hence the knowledge and opportunities it creates, more accessible.