

Proposed guidelines for NTNU's language policy

Foreword

We human beings have unique language skills. Language enables us to talk about the past, present, and future, and with writing we can communicate across time and space. Language creates fellowship, societies, identity, and a sense of belonging. At the same time, language can exclude people from the same fellowship. Inclusion thus depends on language, and it plays a key role in creating and shaping the culture that we have.

Language is also an important tool, not least at university. We use language to think and to communicate our work, through publications, seminars, teaching or dissemination to the public. This communication may be in written, spoken or sign language. This means that language plays an extremely important role in the work that staff and students do; the quality of our work is closely linked to how well we master the language we use. Quality in general is one of the foundation stones at a university. Everyone wants to do their job as well as they can, and language is an essential tool to achieve this. A sound and proactive language policy is therefore a prerequisite for a commitment to quality.

Such a language policy requires NTNU to foster a culture that supports continuous development of language skills among both students and staff. We must all work on developing our language skills as well as our knowledge about the use and diversity of language. This applies equally to our first and second languages and to any other languages that we learn. Thus we do not reach a ceiling for language learning; there is always something new we can learn or an area where we can improve. Language learning is not simply a matter of taking an exam or reaching a predefined level such as B2 in the Common European Framework. It involves a constant effort to develop by working consciously on language skills.

Norwegian universities have largely adopted a policy where Norwegian is the main language, but where English is also used when necessary. This is termed "parallel language use" or "parallel lingualism" in Nordic literature on this subject, and it is embedded in official Norwegian language policy. The reason for such a policy is that the universities are in Norway, where Norwegian is the language that serves as a foundation for use in society, but also because we always will have many students and staff who do not speak Norwegian. Some of our employees are in permanent positions and thus have an obligation to learn Norwegian, while others are in positions where they have neither a duty to learn Norwegian nor working hours allocated for this purpose. For example, neither PhD candidates nor postdoctoral fellows are required to learn Norwegian, and therefore they are not given priority for NTNU's Norwegian courses. By also using English, we ensure that these employees are included. This is essential, because language is the key to integration and cohesion in a broader social context. It is also vital for creating a favourable learning environment for students and a healthy and positive work environment for employees, as well as participation in the inner life of the institution. Finally, inclusive language use contributes to personal development and self-determination. For this reason, many PhDs and postdocs want to learn Norwegian: They realize that even if they can manage in English, effective inclusion depends on learning Norway's main language.

Norway recently introduced a new Language Act. This specifies that Norwegian is the primary language for all public-sector organizations, and it also emphasizes the responsibility of universities to develop and nurture Norwegian as an academic language. Science is global and in principle

independent of the individual language, but at the same time we know that English has become the new Latin. This has two consequences: We need to improve our English skills, and we need to work hard to ensure that we have a well-functioning Norwegian academic language, including good Norwegian academic terms. The responsible government ministries have been concerned about the lack of attention that Norwegian terminology and scientific language have received at universities and university colleges. The new law imposes an institutional responsibility on us to ensure the vitality of academic Norwegian, which is a prerequisite for dissemination to society. The Official Norwegian Report *Akademisk ytringsfrihet [Academic freedom of expression]* (NOU 2022:2) also emphasizes the importance of academic Norwegian in safeguarding academic freedom of expression.

Language is both culture and infrastructure, and Norwegian thus serves as a foundation for functions in society. Therefore, it is also extremely important to stimulate awareness and knowledge about language and language policy at NTNU. The power of the language policy guidelines lies in the practice that they help to create. Managers have a special responsibility to ensure that the guidelines are followed, but we must all contribute through the judgements and choices we make every day.

Chapter 1. General principles

1. The language policy must contribute to enhancing quality in all of NTNU's activities.
2. The main language at NTNU is Norwegian, where the term "Norwegian" includes both Bokmål and Nynorsk. Norwegian sign language is the national sign language. Danish and Swedish can be placed on an equal footing with Norwegian. English is the primary non-Scandinavian language.
3. Written communication at NTNU must follow the principles of plain language – that is, it must be correct, clear, and tailored to the user.
4. NTNU must ensure that the language rights of students and staff are protected.
5. NTNU must follow up its statutory responsibility to maintain and develop Norwegian as an academic and specialist language in all its academic communities.
6. Use of the official written languages must comply with the law. This involves specific measures to strengthen proficiency in and use of Norwegian Nynorsk.
7. NTNU must practise parallel language use. In practice, this means "Norwegian when you can, English when you must".
8. Permanent staff at NTNU must have the language skills they need in order to communicate well with students, employees and the world around them.
9. Employees who do not master a Scandinavian language when they are appointed are responsible for learning Norwegian at B2 level within three years and continuously developing their language skills.
10. NTNU is to offer employees good opportunities to learn Norwegian in particular, but must also offer support to improve proficiency in English. The units must establish a framework for a work situation that enables all employees to develop their language skills.

Chapter 2. Education

11. Norwegian is to be the main language of instruction at NTNU.
12. Students at all levels must know the main terminology for their disciplines in both Norwegian and English, or in other foreign languages when relevant.
13. Academic literature and teaching materials in bachelor's degree programmes must be in Norwegian when good Norwegian resources are available. Exemptions must be justified and grounded in the academic community.
14. Norwegian, English and other foreign languages can be used in parallel at master's and PhD levels. Academic considerations determine the choice of language.
15. International programmes of study at NTNU must be taught in English. Teaching in Norwegian is possible if all students master a Scandinavian language, as long as the syllabus and coursework requirements are still in English.
16. The language of instruction must always be stated in course descriptions and programme descriptions.
17. Examination question papers must be in the language in which the course is taught unless otherwise specified in the course description. If examination question papers are provided in several languages, the content and quality of the text must be the same. For examination question papers in Norwegian, the Regulations regarding the form of Norwegian used in examination question papers [Forskrift om målform i eksamensoppgåver] apply.
18. Bachelor's theses must normally be written in Norwegian. If they are written in English or another non-Scandinavian language, they must have a Norwegian summary.
19. Master's theses can be written in the language that is most suitable for the student and the thesis.
20. Master's theses written in Norwegian must have a summary in English. Master's theses written in a non-Scandinavian language must have a summary in Norwegian.

Chapter 3. Research

21. All employees must master the main terminology in Norwegian in their specific field. The development of Norwegian academic language, including relevant discipline-specific terminology, is a collective responsibility in all the academic communities.
22. Employees can choose the language in which they publish in scientific channels.
23. All PhD theses must have a summary in both Norwegian and English.

Chapter 4. Dissemination and outreach

24. Research-based knowledge and scientific findings must be communicated to the public in language that is clear and easy to understand.
25. Depending on the intended audience, Norwegian and English are NTNU's primary languages for dissemination and outreach.

26. NTNU will provide training and support in dissemination of research in both Norwegian and English.

Chapter 5. Administration, information and contact with society

27. Norwegian is the primary working language in the university administration.
28. Technical and administrative staff at NTNU must be proficient in both Norwegian and English.
29. NTNU's communications must conform to universal design principles. All-staff meetings and similar joint events that include participants who are deaf or hard of hearing must be interpreted in sign language or subtitled. The same applies when management addresses students and staff through audio and video media.

Follow-up

30. Language policy is to be included in the institution's strategies at all levels.
31. NTNU is to have a broad-based committee on language policy that advises on follow-up and implementation of these guidelines as well as the university's language policy. The Rector appoints the committee and assigns its mandate.