

Approved by
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of the Rector of Vytautas Magnus University

VMU LANGUAGE POLICY GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

In 1989, Vytautas Magnus University was re-established by common efforts of Lithuanian and diaspora scientists in order to consolidate and foster humanitarian and social sciences and study fields in the city and the state. The members of re-established Council and Senate, as representatives of world's scientific community, clearly understood the significance of Lithuanian and foreign languages for people in the perspective of their studies, life and activities. Based on this idea, special attention has been paid to the teaching of foreign languages since the beginning of the re-establishment of Vytautas Magnus University.

The fostering of multilingualism is a value of the university, corresponding to the primary goal of the re-establishment – to increase the humanitarian origin in those days' technocratic society of Kaunas and Lithuania. The origin and fostering of the tradition of multilingualism was also influenced by the university's response to the accelerating processes of globalization, the opening of the state of Lithuania to Europe and the world, the free movement of goods and people which conditioned the aim to not only know but also to learn foreign languages. The multilingualism is also developed by the increasing number of scientists and students coming into the university from non-English speaking countries, the increasing number of philological and cultural study programs or the use of material often presented not only in Lithuanian and English languages when introducing students to the global context during study processes.

Taking into account the existing language learning tradition in the aspect of multilingualism development in the university's academic community, society and study processes, Vytautas Magnus University, in order to implement and develop a coherent language policy and to follow the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania, the VMU Statute, Study Regulations, the Rector's orders as well as university's internal legal statements, recommendations of the European Language Council and language policy documents of the advanced European universities, consolidates the university's language policy guidelines with this document which are the basis for the implementation and development of the official university's language policy.

I. INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE / LANGUAGES

According to the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian language is the official language of administration, internal as well as external communication with social partners and target audiences in the university. The correct use of Lithuanian language is one of the cherished values of VMU community.

The main language of international communication is English (British (Br. E.)), according to the need – American English (Am. E.). Other languages of international communication are French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Polish, Latvian, etc. These languages are used depending on functions of the department in terms of language teaching and use.

I. 1. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE

1. Clerical language

The state language is used for clerical work, accounting, accountability, financial and technical documents. In order to guarantee language rights and needs of visiting foreign students, teachers and researchers, the basic documents regulating the implementation of studies and study processes and documents related to social, accommodation, employment and other questions, are provided in Lithuanian and English languages.

Signs in the university buildings and other university spaces are also provided in Lithuanian language with a translation into English. Informational announcements can be presented in various languages.

2. Language of virtual platform

The information in the university's virtual platform is provided in Lithuanian and English languages, if necessary – in other foreign languages.

3. Language of official international events

The official Lithuanian language and working languages of events are used for openings of official international events, presentations of institutions, greetings and others. Upon a request – a translation into Lithuanian sign language is carried out. Latin language is also used in the solemn Senate meetings, awarding regalia of Honorary Doctor, inauguration ceremonies of VMU Rector and other official, solemn events, university's signs and symbols.

4. In order to ensure an equal use of Lithuanian and English academic terminology, an online academic dictionary [Academic Dictionary](#) is used, prepared by VMU.

I. 2. LANGUAGE OF TEACHING

VMU Statute, Regulations of Doctoral Studies and Study Regulations regulate the language of teaching in the university. In cases when studies are carried out not in Lithuanian language, the language of final thesis, written works and doctoral dissertations of the first, the second cycle and integrated studies is determined by the requirements of study programs, Study Regulations and Regulations of Doctoral Studies.

II. LANGUAGES FOR STUDENTS

II. 1. LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE

1. Culture of Lithuanian language and language of profession

All students of the first cycle studies have to study the culture of Lithuanian language and language of profession course according to their study programme.

2. Lithuanian language course for international students

VMU provides free, optional Lithuanian language courses for foreign students who have come to VMU under exchange programs, interinstitutional agreements, state contracts and for full studies. VMU also organizes annual Lithuanian language and culture summer courses where participants can study A1, A2 and B1 levels of Lithuanian language.

3. Lithuanian sign language

Lithuanian sign language (beginners and advanced levels) is an optional study course at VMU.

II. 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILINGUALISM

The variety of languages is one of the challenges for European integration and dialogue among cultures. VMU students of all cycle studies, students from other universities, pupils from schools of general education, academic and non-academic staff, the society, business and public sector employees have an opportunity to study various languages. To ensure needs of the development of language competence of these groups, in 2001, foreign language teaching has been centered at the Centre of Foreign Languages, which has been restructured into the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL <http://uki.vdu.lt/>) in 2012.

Language competence is also developed by studying courses taught in English or other languages, philological as well as various regional and cultural programs. The content of some study programs provides what kind of languages and how many levels students have to learn as a compulsory or optional course.

1. Language choices

The teaching / learning of modern European languages is organized according to the system, defined by Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, of six language proficiency levels which correspond to requirements of language learning: A – beginner user; B – intermediate user; C – advanced user. The goal of language teaching / learning is the acquisition of language competence, which consists of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components. Languages belong to group A study courses which consists of subgroups of four study fields and one foreign language subgroup. The teaching / learning of less learned languages is free, and their list is approved every semester by the Rector's order. The fee for teaching / learning other languages is regulated by the order for the payment for foreign language teaching.

2. English language teaching / learning

From the foreign language subgroup, which consists of the compulsory English language and other foreign language courses taught in the university, students have to choose no less than 12 and no more than 24 credits:

- students who have begun studying English language at the university from higher level than A1, have to reach C1 level of academic English, aimed at the development of receptive and productive verbal and written types of language activities;
- students who have begun studying English language at A1 level or enrolled at the university in 2015 or earlier have to reach B2 level of academic English;

students who start to study at the university and have C1 level of academic English, have to study a course of higher level of English language or other foreign language with a minimum of 12 credits. Students can use their remaining credits to study English courses of higher than C1 level, other foreign language courses or optional study courses.

3. Languages for specific purposes

In order to ensure the strategic goal of VMU, to focus newly developed and existing study programs into interdisciplinarity, students are offered to study foreign languages for specific purposes from group A courses. It is recommended to choose courses of various foreign languages as a language of profession from group A courses or C1/C2 level English for specific purposes courses, prepared for students of different study fields.

4. Languages as a component of study programs

Some study programs require students to study certain languages a certain number of semesters and / or there are requirements for the language competence level, which students have to acquire.

5. Minor language studies

Minor language study programs provide an opportunity to acquire, alongside the studied profession, the linguistic and cultural competence of various languages, which extends and improves students' employment possibilities.

6. Language requirements and opportunities for participants of mobility programs

Participants of all exchange programs and incoming students have to have English (or other foreign) language competence, the level of which is defined by a contract. Students who have come to the university can choose from all language courses if it is permitted in the contract. After returning from the exchange programs, the language competence acquired in a foreign higher education institution is assessed and registered.

7. Linguistic support for students

IFL provides counseling services for students of all study cycles about the selection of foreign language level and any other issue concerning language learning. An individual development of language competence is available at the computer assisted language learning laboratory. VMU students and visiting students from other countries can improve their language and intercultural communication competencies in the form of tandem learning and participating in the mentor's program. A virtual learning / teaching platform is created, the material for tandem language learning is developed and adapted and organizational support from IFL teachers is provided for the tandem learning / teaching, which is a collaborative learning / teaching when students switch roles of "teacher" and "student" in teaching their first language.

II. 3. STUDY PROGRAMS IN ENGLISH (OR OTHER) LANGUAGE

The strategical goal of VMU is to increase the internationalization of studies by creating international (joint and double degree) study programs, promoting mobility in studies. This determines the emergence of study programs taught in English. The second cycle study programs in English language started in 2009, first cycle study programs – in 2012. Taking into account the changes in the market, students' interest and university's preparation to have programs in foreign languages, the number of programs is changing every year. The information about VMU degree programs in English is constantly available in international study portals: www.studyin.lt, www.studyportals.eu, www.masterstudies.com.

Some study programs at the university are conducted only in English, enrolling citizens of Republic of Lithuania and foreign countries into joint study groups. Separate study courses and consultations can be provided in other foreign languages. The English language competence of students from programs taught in English has to correspond to the language competence requirements defined in the study program.

1. Support for students and applicants into programs in English (or other) language

Students intending to study / studying at VMU first and second cycle study programs in English can improve their English language competence at VMU English prep-courses or study VMU English (or other language) courses.

II. 4. PHILOLOGICAL STUDY PROGRAMS

The multilingual competence and knowledge of cultures are developed at VMU in philological as well as linguistic and cultural study programs and the number of these programs is increasing. Philology and languages are studied since the re-establishment of the university. The department of Lithuanian Studies was established at the Faculty of Humanities (HMF) in 1990, became an important part of Lithuanian studies and made a significant contribution to the fostering of the

national language in Lithuania and all over the world. Bachelor studies of English philology has started since 1991 and since 1997 other philology study programs have been registered and regularly updated: English Philology, English and German Philology, Baltic Region Studies, Language and Culture of Francophone Countries, Italian Studies and Romance Languages, Lithuanian Philology and Publishing, Languages and Cultures of Scandinavian Countries, German Language and Communication (see current VMU bachelor's and master's study programs in philology).

III. LINGUISTIC SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSITY'S STAFF

In order to ensure the internationalization and the quality of studies, the academic staff have to have the intermediate (B2) user competence of at least one foreign language. Teachers who prepare and teach courses in foreign language have to have the advanced (C1) user competence of the target language. Teachers teaching in Lithuanian language have to use correct Lithuanian language (oral and written). Academic and non-academic staff are encouraged to talk and write in correct Lithuanian language.

III. 1. LINGUISTIC SUPPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC STAFF AND RESEARCHERS

1. The development of teachers' language and intercultural competence

All VMU teachers have the opportunity to improve their foreign language and intercultural competencies by attending language courses, prepared by IFL, together with students or specific language and intercultural communication courses according to needs of the faculty and teachers.

2. The improvement of language, intercultural and didactic competencies of teachers teaching in foreign language

Support is offered for teachers who prepare and teach in foreign language: seminars for the development of foreign language, the didactics of course's teaching in a multicultural and multilingual environment, intercultural competencies and the improvement of didactic competence of course's teaching in foreign language, according to needs of the faculty and teachers.

3. Support for foreign teachers – the improvement of Lithuanian language competence

All VMU teachers have the opportunity to improve their Lithuanian language competence for free by attending the Lithuanian language and culture summer courses with students, organized by HMF, or attending semester long specific language and intercultural communication courses according to needs of the faculty and teachers.

4. Support for researchers

Linguistic support for researchers who present / intend to present reports at scientific conferences, publish / intend to publish scientific works in foreign languages, participate in international projects, etc. is provided according to needs of the faculty and teachers.

III. 2. LINGUISTIC SUPPORT FOR THE NON-ACADEMIC STAFF

Non-academic staff has the opportunity to learn languages together with students.

The improvement of language and intercultural communication competencies and linguistic support for specific non-academic staff groups are provided according to the need and type of work.

IV. INFORMAL LANGUAGE TEACHING / LEARNING

1. The improvement of languages at informal activities

Language competencies and knowledge of cultures are developed during informal events and activities. Students' language clubs and organizations are actively functioning in VMU, which focus on informal language learning and knowledge of cultures.

2. Linguistic support for the society

VMU provides wide opportunities for the development of language competencies not only for members of VMU community. Not VMU community members sign the IFL free listeners agreement and study their selected language in groups with VMU students. Course groups for society are formed depending on demand. The fee for language teaching / learning is regulated by the procedure for the payment for courses of informal foreign language teaching.

Pupils of VMU "Rasa" gymnasium and other VMU partner schools have the opportunity to study foreign languages in groups with VMU students or in separately formed groups. A certificate of competence is issued after successfully completing language course programme and passing the final exam.

V. THE ASSESSMENT, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND REGISTRATION OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

1. The assessment, acknowledgment and registration of foreign language competence

VMU IFL Testing Center carries out the assessment of the foreign language competence. The fee for this service is regulated by the procedure of the payment for the assessment of foreign language competence.

2. The assessment of foreign language competence of VMU first year students of the first cycle and integrated studies

The English language competence of all VMU first year students of the first cycle and integrated studies is determined according to the results of the diagnostic English language test, prepared by the Institute of Foreign Languages, and the results of the National examination of English. Students whose results are 90% and more from the National examination of English are not obliged to take the diagnostic test. They study chosen C1 or C1/C2 level English language course or take the C1 level test, prepared by Institute of Foreign Languages, and have their C1 level competence confirmed by passing the test with high results. The C1 level competence is acknowledged for students who submit documents proving the C1 level competence (certificates of standardized English language tests or the acquisition of education in English).

The assessment of other foreign language competence levels is carried out for VMU students of the first cycle studies when these languages are included in the study program.

3. The assessment of English language competence of applicants to VMU second cycle study programs

The assessment of English language competence of applicants to second cycle study programs is carried out according to the requirements of the faculty's study programs.

4. The implementation of standardized foreign language tests

Under the terms of cooperation contracts and licenses, VMU IFL carries out standardized foreign language examinations and tests as well as provides the service to the society of assessing language competence, for example, to candidates for the position of public servant and others. IFL offers preparatory courses for the university community and society.

VI. LINGUISTIC SAFETY

VMU language policy aims at ensuring the linguistic safety of the community and respect for the linguistic diversity, defining areas and contexts of the use of various languages in the university, the possibilities for the development of language competencies and the language choice.

The monitoring of the linguistic safety is constantly carried out through evaluations and surveys. Based on the feedback data, the correction of language policy procedures is performed.

A successful language policy at the university allows to prepare an intellectual graduate for work in a new, global labor market with the knowledge of the subtleties of the discipline studied and the advantage of the linguistic preparation, the cultural knowledge and intercultural skills.

The language policy guidelines enable to use the university's linguistic and intercultural diversity as a potentially rich source for the improvement of the quality of studies, the development of science, the teaching of tolerance, the personal development and the cooperation of the community in order to achieve the university's strategic goals.