



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

RADBOUD INTERNATIONAL 2025 - LANGUAGE POLICY

Multi-annual workplan Language policy Radboud University 2018-2025

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This memorandum details the ambitions regarding **language policy** as they are formulated in the new internationalisation strategy *Radboud International 2025* and its associated multi-annual workplan:

- Ambition 1: how the university formalises the decision-making process relating to the languages of instruction and communication;
- Ambition 2: how the international classroom will be realised;
- Ambition 3: how the inclusive community and multilingual campus will be achieved;
- Ambition 4: how the academic language proficiency of students can be systematically improved.

This memorandum describes a collection of measures for each ambition, which will facilitate the achievement of the goals for 2025. Many of the measures are a continuation and intensification of successful language policies aimed at lecturers and (international) staff of the university, in which funding for English, Dutch, and intercultural skills courses is matched.

A new aspect is that international diploma students can, under certain conditions, qualify for a free Social Dutch course. The focus on multilingualism and the improvement of academic language proficiency of students is also new.

Starting next academic year, all first-year students will take a diagnostic test for their language of instruction (Dutch or English). In doing so, students are made aware of the importance of academic skills and will be able to improve them if necessary.

CREATING A NEW LANGUAGE POLICY STEERING COMMITTEE

In order to make informed choices in alignment with the wishes and interests of the faculty in the coming years, the Executive Board will create a new Language Policy steering committee. The steering committee will meet once or twice a year, and consists of:

- A dean
- A full professor from the Faculty of Arts*
- Head of the International Office (IO)
- Strategy, Education, and Research Department (SER) director
- Human Resources Department (HR) director
- Student Affairs director
- One or several education directors
- One or several assistant professors
- Radboud in'to Languages director*
- Radboud in'to Languages Language Policy project leader*
- SER Policy Officer*
- IO Policy Officer*
- A student from the University Student Council (USR)

The directors/heads can also send a mandated delegate.

* These members of staff will be part of a core group that will provide monitoring of the organisational progress and implementation of the policy. Radboud in'to Languages is present at the steering committee to provide expertise, not as member of the committee.

LANGUAGE POLICY FOR STUDENTS, A NEW POLICY CHOICE

Quality first

Quality is the most important value in the education vision of Radboud University. Language proficiency is a key academic skill that contributes to the quality of our education. For this reason, a language policy, which includes students, is a substantial component of the new strategy.

Correlation between language proficiency and study success

Research conducted at the KU in Leuven (de Moor, 2015) shows that language proficiency and study success are strongly correlated; first-year students with a low score on their language proficiency test at the start of the year had accumulated fewer study points and earned lower grades six months later. The students' performance was also significantly lower at the end of their first year. International research shows that a lack of language proficiency forms a threshold for study success (Elder, Bright, Read 2015; Van Dyk, 2015). Some universities in the Netherlands, including the Vrije Universiteit and Utrecht University, have already implemented compulsory language testing (Dutch and English) and remediation.

Radboud University sees it as its duty to support students in the acquisition of new academic language-proficiency competencies. This new policy choice logically follows the Quality First premise and the research results proving that better language proficiency leads to better study performance.

ELABORATION ON THE AMBITIONS OF RADBOUD INTERNATIONAL 2025

The aim of the internationalisation strategy is that Radboud University will be an internationally oriented, intercultural, and multilingual knowledge institution by 2025. This is why new strategy ambitions were formulated in the area of language policy, intercultural skills, and inclusion. Realising ambitions is a joint effort of all stakeholders at all levels: faculties, SER, IO, Radboud in'to Languages, and other stakeholders as well as individual staff members and students.

Four ambitions are described and linked to a collection of measures below. Every scenario is budgeted separately. A detailed budget can be found in Appendix 1.

AMBITION 1: Determining the language of instruction on a custom-made basis for each new and existing programme, specialisation, or course.

The collection of measures for ambition 1 specifically consists of:

1. New guidelines will be created for the development of new English-taught courses, specifying the criteria for the choice of language of instruction, and measures to assure the language proficiency of lecturers and students;
2. Every programme will be required to re-assess the desired language of instruction for the mid-term review of the inspection;
3. The faculty boards will ensure that the choice of language of instruction is considered carefully for each programme, and that students, lecturers, PhD candidates, and other staff members are supported in their Dutch and English language proficiency;
4. The systematic screening and training of lecturers that took place in phases 1 and 2 of the language policy will be further expanded;
5. University-wide language codes of conduct will be formulated. These will contain agreements about the language of instruction for education, for all formal and informal communication, in a management context, and for participational and consulting bodies.

AMBITION 2: Realisation of an *international classroom* approach to English-taught courses and programmes.

What is an *international classroom*?

An *international classroom* is an educational approach in which:

- students from different backgrounds (culture, language, education, and experience) learn with each other and from each other;
- the content is based on a universal, international perspective of the topic;
- the diversity of students and staff members is used effectively and in a focused way;
- the overall learning environment and methodology are adapted to the diversity among students and lecturers.

Our university is an internationally focused, multilingual university with 12% international students, and 25% international staff members. To profit from the enriching elements of this internationalisation, all stakeholders must possess *intercultural awareness* and intercultural communication skills.

Several parties on the campus are engaged in intercultural communication. Central management in this area is needed to realise the abovementioned ambition. SER seems to be the obvious department, as it covers the whole university.

The collection of measures for ambition 2 specifically consists of:

1. assigning the central management of the realisation of the *international classroom* to SER;
2. developing a suitable educational offering in the area of intercultural communication for all language groups;
3. creating practical guidelines (text and/or video) to support the lecturers in the *international classroom*;
4. creating an introduction video for new students about the university and the city, and about Dutch language and culture;

5. creating a plan to permanently focus on interculturalism and the *international classroom* in the recruitment information as well as during orientation week, labour market orientation, and academic ceremonies;
6. reinforcing the welcoming feeling and increasing the *stay rate* to realise a smooth transition to the *international classroom*. A (conditionally) free *Social Dutch* course for first-year students and PhD candidates will be set up.

AMBITION 3: Developing an inclusive Radboud community on a multilingual campus

Besides Dutch as the language of instruction and interaction, English is the lingua franca in science and in (part of) our education. Language connects; good academic language proficiency increases the engagement and accessibility of education for all. Good academic language proficiency is a necessary competency that fits in with the quality ambitions of the university. This is why it is important that all staff members, if their job requires it, have a good proficiency of English, Dutch, and other languages.

Radboud University is bilingual, but the campus is multilingual: Dutch, English, German, and other languages are used in a flexible way, sometimes actively, and sometimes passively (*lingua receptiva*). The university facilitates students who want to become more proficient in a second foreign language. This is in line with European policy. Additionally, research will be conducted into how (individual) multilingualism can be further cultivated on campus.

The collection of measures for ambition 3 specifically consists of:

1. provision of English classes for all staff members and PhD candidates, based on the matching principle¹;
2. reimbursement for staff members who receive their English language certificate, based on the matching principle;
3. provision of Dutch classes (incl. *Social Dutch*) for international staff members and PhD students, based on the matching principle;
4. provision of the course *Social Dutch* to students for free (based on reimbursement);
5. continuation of the current language course discount scheme for staff members;
6. provision of *Intensive Language Programmes* with 50% discount for staff members;
7. education and support of highly-educated refugee students;
8. extension of the language course discount scheme: 50-70% discount for students for group courses in 17 languages;

1 50% sponsored by the Executive Board and 50% matched by the faculty or service

AMBITION 4: Implementing a plan to monitor, test, and improve the academic language proficiency of students (5 scenarios)

What is academic language proficiency?

Academic language proficiency is a competency in which:

- the student has mastered the language at an abstract level and is able to communicate with academics and others about academia, and to express their thoughts and ideas professionally in a work or educational context.
- the student is aware of and focuses expressly on style, spelling, argumentation, grammar, vocabulary, and structure of spoken and written texts;
- the student has mastered specific skills such as writing, reading, listening, and presenting as expected of an academic.

To be able to educate students to be communicatively strong academics who are well-prepared for the labour market, it is necessary to follow a language policy that is aimed at improving both Dutch and English language proficiency. This is, of course, dependent on the language of instruction of the programme. Learning objectives, diagnostic testing, learning- and teaching activities must be closely linked to each other. Admission requirements, learning paths, and learning outcomes need to be clearly defined.

In order to express the value of multilingualism and bilingual education at Radboud University, the university will consider including the distinction “language-conscious and proficient student”. This will positively distinguish Radboud University students on the labour market.

The university will take measures at three levels (university, students, lecturers) to facilitate students in developing their language proficiency during their studies, with an emphasis on written skills.

The collection of measures for ambition 4 specifically consists of:

University

1. Clarification of the entry requirements for English and Dutch;
2. Defining learning paths: in consultation with faculties and programmes, clarify how formative testing, feedback, learning options, and support are implemented, and how the development of language proficiency is monitored in students;
3. Establishing learning outcomes: they describe how students’ language and communicative skills are part of the final qualifications of the Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes. These learning outcomes can be established by the Examination Boards;
4. Development of online writing education tools;
5. Provide an overview of all available (online) tools and training for lecturers and students.

Students/English

6. Diagnostic testing of Academic English for all first-year students in English-speaking programmes. The test will form part of the curriculum;

7. Provide support for English writing skills during all Bachelor's years, linking it with the writing assignments within the programme. This can be in the form of language proficiency lectures, writing tools, and/or online exercises;
8. Offering extracurricular support for students in Dutch-taught programmes that are not currently tested for academic English.

Students/Dutch

9. Diagnostic testing of Academic Dutch for all first-year students in Dutch-taught programmes. The language test will be a part of the curriculum;
10. Provision of one or more preparatory lectures in academic language proficiency at the start of the study for all first-years in Dutch-taught programmes;
11. Provision of language proficiency lectures, writing tools, and/or online exercises and retesting;
12. Offering additional support in the first year to students with weak language skills and to non-Dutch-speaking students, based on the outcomes of the test and in accordance with the writing assignments within the programme.

Lecturers

13. Establishing guidelines for lecturers in relation to language development education for students;
14. Development of tools and training programmes that lecturers can use to easily and efficiently provide personalised feedback about the language proficiency of students.

Research into the effects of language policy

15. Initiating research into testing and language policy, and into the relationship between writing guidance, and study and PhD programme success.
16. Tracking cohorts for a longitudinal view of academic language proficiency acquisition;
17. Exploring the option of granting the distinction "language-proficient student" to graduates.