

Q and A on language policy at TU/e: INTERNAL

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General

What will happen?

As of 1-1-2020, TU/e will switch to English as the lingua franca (working language) across the board. This applies to management, education, research and services.

What does that imply in real terms?

1. The spoken language changes: English if necessary, Dutch if possible. Therefore conferencing will not be in the English language if the participants all master the Dutch language.
2. Written communication changes: in principle in English. Unless, for example, cooperation with external partners or legal regulations require communication to be in Dutch.

Who is going to apply this?

The language policy will apply to all staff and students at TU/e. So directors, support and academic staff, and students.

Why is TU/e going to do this?

There are 3 main reasons to switch to English as the lingua franca.

1. The number of non-Dutch speaking staff and students is substantial. Teachers and researchers relatively often come from abroad (e.g., assistant professors 40%, associate professors and full professors 20% and research assistants 60%), and for students this is 13%. We expect further growth in the coming years.
2. Internationalization is crucial to the employment prospects of our students.
3. TU/e strives for diversity and inclusiveness (in terms of gender, nationality and science profile, for example). We want to be accessible to everyone and do not exclude anyone.

TU/e is a community in which students and academics cooperate in multicultural, multidisciplinary groups, and where employees feel at home and want to keep working here. Everyone must be able to understand each other at the least.

So a common language is required for us to work and live together.

What does this mean for Dutch?

TU/e considers it important that international students and staff in the Netherlands can function properly. We also think it is important that international students and employees remain for the Dutch labor market. Knowledge of the Dutch language is essential for this. TU/e therefore also supports everyone who wants to learn the Dutch language or who wants to improve their Dutch.

In addition, Dutch remains the common language at the moment that English does not have to be.

When?

As of 1-1-2020.

What does this imply for staff and students?

Most staff in education and research and students already communicate with each other in English. The change will be greater for OBP staff. That is why this will be introduced (see below) in a customized way.

How is this being implemented?

The starting point for the implementation of the language policy is that it will be done in a development-oriented and differentiated manner, which means a focus on growing to the desired level, which is not the same for all target/job groups. It is not expected that everyone will speak and write perfect English on 1 January 2020.

An inventory will be made of the level of English required per job category/employee. This differs for a secretarial employee and a teacher, for example.

On the basis of language proficiency requirements per job category and in consultation with services and departments/groups, a 'tailor-made' project will be drawn up for the development of WP and OBP. This development is further monitored in annual appraisal interviews. This way everyone will be given the opportunity to reach the desired level.

For new staff, the requirements regarding the level of English language proficiency in recruitment and selection are explicitly stated.

For students, a program will be set up aimed at language proficiency (English and Dutch). Here, the language proficiency is tested and, if necessary, additional training and exercises offered.

Is TU/e the only Dutch university that has English as its official language?

No. Maastricht University already has English as its official language while WUR has switched to English for management and employee participation, but still has a number of Dutch BSc programs. The University of Twente is switching to English as the lingua franca and the TUD is bilingual, just like Erasmus.

Is this language policy not at odds with the recommendation made by the KNAW?

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) advocates above all that the English language should not be 'imposed' unnecessarily in (Bachelor) study programs. There is no question of this at TU/e: study programs choose the language in which they provide education in the respective study.

Specific (internal)

My English is not so good, so what will happen next?

If your English at the beginning is not yet at the level that is required for your job, you will receive a tailor-made course. For example, a course or training program that enables you to reach the desired level in the long run.

Does the quality of education not suffer from this?

The preservation of the quality of education is of course of paramount importance. Teachers are therefore the target group for whom the next phase has the highest priority. It will be evident that various employees are already at a good level. They will have already been assessed or followed an English course in recent years. A program will be offered to those who still need development.

Does this lead to a large increase in international students?

Most TU/e programs are already in English (all in the Master programs, 11 of 15 in the Bachelor programs, next year 14). International students just like their Dutch counterparts also participate in selection (if applicable). Since this year, too, prospective international students are also taking part in the compulsory study choice check.