

Hong Kong Baptist University
A Summary of the Development of University Language Policy (ULP) and
Language Requirements for Graduation

The following summary is compiled based on the important decisions made at the Senate meetings regarding ULP and language requirements for graduation. Extracts of the relevant Senate papers have been provided on the e-doc platform (<https://edoc.hkbu.edu.hk>) for reference.

2002/2003

Proposal for an Institutional Language Policy

1. At the meeting held on 24 March 2003, the Academic Development Committee (ADC) considered a proposal from the then Academic Vice-President on the establishment of an Institutional Language Policy using English as the medium of instruction (MOI). ADC resolved that:
 - i) An institutional language policy should be established using English as the medium of instruction;
 - ii) Faculties and Schools are required to adopt English as the “default” medium of instruction; and
 - iii) Faculty/School Boards are required to propose an implementation plan and timetable for submission to the Senate.

Establishment of University Language Policy and approval procedures for exemptions from the Policy

2. The Senate, at its 4th meeting (2002/03) held on 26 May 2003, considered and approved the ADC’s recommendations that an institutional language policy should be established using English as the MOI; and that Faculties/Schools/Departments were required to submit an implementation plan and timetable to the Senate. In addition, the Senate also resolved that justifications for variations from the University Language Policy should be submitted to the then Course Accreditation and Review Committee (CARC) for endorsement (please refer to (a) SEN/02-03/4/B6).

Guidelines on the use of English as MOI

3. Following the 4th Senate meeting (2002/03), a set of guidelines on the use of English as the MOI was compiled for reference of Faculties/Schools in their formulation of implementation plans (see below or (b) Annex 1 of

SEN/02-03/5/B2 for details):

- i) Formal classroom teaching including lectures and tutorials will be conducted in English. Supplemental explanation in Chinese is allowed occasionally provided that the same explanation is given in English when non-Chinese speakers are present. Unless there are very strong reasons to use Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) as the teaching language for particular courses, for example, due to discipline specific considerations, English is normally encouraged.
- ii) Students will be encouraged to use English to ask or answer questions, but Cantonese/Putonghua may be used provided that it is translated for the benefit of non-Chinese speakers.
- iii) In general, assignments, examinations, and project reports should be written in English and oral presentations and group discussions in class should be conducted in English with the exception of the discipline specific courses.
- iv) An English speaking environment will be encouraged in the University where students do not just attend classes conducted in English, but can communicate with each other in English outside the classroom.
- v) Depending on circumstances or personal considerations, informal discussions or interactions with students, e.g. academic advising, mentoring and field trips may be conducted in Chinese if all students understand Chinese.
- vi) Faculties/Schools may propose a gradual plan for implementing the language policy step-by-step taking into account the requirements of the specific disciplines and allowing flexibility as deemed necessary in the implementation process.
- vii) In that connection, all Faculties/Schools are requested to submit an implementation plan and timetable along with any strong reasons for proposing variations from the University Language Policy, to CARC for consideration via the Academic Registry by 14 June 2003. CARC will then prepare a summary report for discussion at the next Senate meeting to be held on 2 July 2003.

Implementation Plan

4. The CARC, at its 5th meeting (2002/03) held on 18 June 2003, considered the submissions from various Faculty/School Boards on their implementation plans and justifications for variations from the University Language Policy (please refer to (b) Annex 2 of SEN/02-03/5/B2). Based on the submissions, the following general principles were observed:

- i) While appreciating the benefits of mother-tongue education, for the sake of a good English learning environment, the Faculties/Schools are generally in support of the University's policy of using English as the "default" language of instruction.
 - ii) It was understood that the use of English as the "default" language of instruction would not preclude the use of Chinese (Cantonese and Putonghua) in the teaching of materials, texts and subjects related to Chinese language and culture, such as Chinese language and literature and journalism; Chinese philosophy and history; Chinese music; as well as Chinese medicine. These and other similar subjects would be taught in Chinese.
 - iii) Subjects with a comparative or interdisciplinary element involving Chinese materials, texts and culture would necessitate the use of Chinese as at least one of the languages of instruction. Subjects such as Humanities, Translation, CTV, Sociology and others belong to this category.
 - iv) For disciplines intended for training graduates to work in a Chinese language context, such as Social Work and Education Studies, there would be a justification for some of the subjects to be taught in Chinese.
 - v) Language classes for French, German, Spanish and Japanese would be conducted as far as feasible in the appropriate language.
 - vi) While most Religion and Philosophy (RP) subjects in the Complementary Studies group would be taught in Chinese for the sake of accessibility to students, at least five subjects per semester would be offered in English.
5. The CARC endorsed the submissions, and noted that the Faculties/Schools would undertake to ensure that the "default" language of instruction for other subjects is English. Nevertheless, the CARC also noted the problems of immediate implementation of the language policy in some departments, thus proposed to Senate that the policy should be implemented in a phase-in manner within a two-year period from 2003/04 to 2004/05 (please refer to (b) SEN/02-03/5/B2).

Implementation of ULP in AY2003/04

6. The Senate, at its 5th meeting (2002/03), resolved to adopt the paper on the University Language Policy and to approve the implementation plans on the University Language Policy submitted by Faculties/ Schools with effect from the 2003/04 academic year. The paper would continue to be kept under review. The move would be in the direction of adopting English as the MOI; only a very small proportion of subjects could, with very strong justifications, be taught in

Chinese (please refer to (c) minutes of 5th Senate meeting (2002/03)).

7. The following statement on the University Language Policy has been printed on the University Calendar/Bulletin since 2004/05:

Medium of Instruction

English is the medium of instruction for formal classroom teaching, with exception for Chinese-related courses.

2006/2007

English Language Enhancement Strategy

8. A Task Force on English Language Enhancement Strategy was set up in 2006 to review the University's language policy of adopting English as the MOI. The Senate, at its 2nd meeting (2006/07) held on 20 November 2006, considered a report from the Task Force. An extensive review on English language enhancement strategy had been undertaken with a self-assessment submitted by each faculty/school in the University. The Office of the then Academic Vice-President undertook to oversee the implementation of the English language enhancement strategy as recommended by the Task Force (please refer to (d) SEN/06-07/2/B2).

Upgrading Putonghua as a Graduation Requirement

9. According to the results of the "Survey on Opinions of Employers on Major Aspects of Performance of Publicly-funded First Degree Graduates in Year 2003" conducted by the Education and Manpower Bureau, the Putonghua proficiency of HKBU graduates ranked seventh out of the eight institutions. In order to enable HKBU undergraduate students to reach foundation Putonghua proficiency so that their ability of communication and their competitiveness in their career development would be enhanced, the Senate approved the proposal of the Faculty of Arts for all undergraduate students be required to meet the Putonghua requirements for graduation with effect from the AY2007 intake. (please refer to Senate papers (e) SEN/06-07/4/B 2 and (f) SEN/06-07/5/B 2)

2009/2010

Review of English as MOI

10. Further to the 2006 review on the use of English as the MOI, the AR had conducted in 2009/10 an analysis of the Teaching Evaluation results of the past three academic years with a view to gauging the degree of compliance of various courses to their declared MOI (i.e. English). The results of which had been returned to the Deans for follow up actions. As there appeared to be confusion on how the policy on MOI should be interpreted, the AR suggested that the issue be taken forward by the Teaching and Learning Policy Committee (TLPC) for thorough discussion. The Senate Chairman reiterated that the University had a very firm stance towards the use of English as the MOI. A clearer definition of the policy would surely be helpful to foster compliance (please refer to Senate paper (g) SEN/09-10/6/R 4).

2010/2011

Upholding the use of English as MOI

11. The TLPC discussed the matters in relation to the MOI policy at its March, April and May meetings in 2010/11. Members of TLPC unanimously supported that there are many sound reasons for the University to retain the existing Senate's policy to adopt English as the MOI at HKBU. A series of consultation with Deans and colleagues had been held. Colleagues generally agreed that the University should uphold the use of English language as the MOI.

Strengthening of the MOI Policy implementation

12. The Senate at its 7th meeting (2010/11) approved the recommendations of TLPC (please refer to (h) SEN/10-11/7/B 11):
 - a) Statement of MOI on the Calendar/Bulletin be revised as follows:

The medium of instruction for formal classroom teaching at HKBU is English, except for those courses that are granted exemption. ~~Courses that use a language other than English as the medium of instruction must apply for exemption from the University. Exceptions will be granted on a case-by-case basis.~~
 - b) Academic Registry will work closely with the Heads of Departments and Deans to ensure that all courses applying for the MOI exemption, with strong justification, are submitted timely to the Academic Registry before

the beginning of each academic year. All submissions will have to be endorsed by the respective Heads and approved by the respective Deans. These will then be forwarded to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) for consideration and approval.

- c) At the beginning of each academic year, a memorandum will be issued by the Vice-President (Academic) to each of the academic/teaching colleagues of the University community to remind them of the University's MOI policy and this policy requires strict compliance of all teaching staff.
- d) For all new student orientation programmes, students should be introduced to the "English" campus environment with the understanding that most, if not all, classes will be conducted in English. Time will be spent on discussing the rationale behind such a University policy so that all new students are aware of the importance of achieving high language competence during their study in the University, the accomplishment of which will prepare them well as future global citizens.
- e) To enhance transparency and to be fair to all our students, in addition to showing the levels, units, number of lectures/tutorials/laboratory hours assigned to each course, the course descriptions in the Calendar/Bulletin should be updated to include the MOI of each course so as to enhance transparency.

2011/2012

Position and stance of HKBU on its MOI Policy

13. The QAC at its 2nd meeting (2011/12) re-iterated that the ultimate aim of the University's upholding English as the MOI is to ensure that the bi-literate and trilingual competency of our students is up to standard so that they could remain competitive in a multi-lingual working environment upon graduation. The TLPC was invited to take heed of the above concerns raised by the QAC and come up with a position paper that could properly present the stance of the University on the MOI policy for further consideration of the Senate. The Senate reiterated that the senior management had no intention to exert any pressure on the academic staff nor to interfere with their academic freedom. The ultimate aim of the University's MOI policy is to ensure the bi-literate and trilingual competency of our students. The Chairman trusted that the TLPC would balance the needs of

various parties and come up with a proposal for consultation among the University community and for further deliberation of the Senate (Please refer to (i) minutes of 2nd Senate meeting (2011/12)).

Re-affirming the University's position on maintaining English as the MOI

14. It was recapitulated at the 3rd Senate meeting (2011/12) that the University language policy as approved by the Senate in May 2003 had been in force and that the MOI for formal classroom teaching at HKBU should be English, except for courses granted exemption. The discussions at the Senate, QAC and TLPC had re-affirmed the University's position to that effect. The Senate Chairman remarked that the recent allegations against the University language policy made to the media by a minority of teaching staff and students were not fair to the majority of staff and students of the University, in particular for the fact that such allegations were made without considering the long-term interest of the majority of students with regard to their learning and development (Please refer to (j) minutes of 3rd Senate meeting (2011/12)). After the meeting, a memo was issued by the VPA to all staff and students regarding the reactivation of the University Language Policy along the vein of the 2003 policy to monitor the implementation of the language policy.

Submission of LPI Plan and MOI Plan

15. It was resolved at the 6th Senate meeting (2011/12) held on 28 June 2012 that, commencing AY2012/13, a regular exercise be conducted to collect from Faculties/Schools/AVA the annual submission of the Language Policy Implementation (LPI) Plans and the lists of courses with proposed Medium of Instruction ("MOI Plans") to be offered in the next academic year (Please refer to (k) minutes of 6th Senate meeting (2011/12)).

2012/13

Inclusion of the MOI on academic transcripts

16. The Senate, at its 5th meeting (2012/13), approved the proposal for recording of MOI on the official on academic transcripts with effect from the 2013 intake. This would provide reference for stakeholders locally and internationally, which is believed to be of benefit to students in their future academic and career pursuits.

17. At the 5th Senate Meeting (2012/13), it was clarified that it would be up to the

academic units to determine the MOI for individual courses when they worked on the curriculum, and that the University would entrust the decision on MOI for courses to respective academic units instead of setting criteria for them to follow. Besides, there would not be a target percentage for the offering of EMI courses either. However, with the understanding that English was the official MOI of the University, it was expected that EMI courses should always be in the majority (Please refer to (l) SEN/12-13/5/B 2).

2013/14

Inclusion of sub-degree programmes in the annual submission exercise for MOI

18. In the first two rounds of submission exercises for courses to be offered in 2012/13 and 2013/14, programmes/courses at the sub-degree level had not been included in the submissions. Nevertheless, given the existing articulation pathways available for Associate Degree (AD)/Higher Diploma (HD) graduates to enter the self-financed undergraduate (Top-up) programmes offered by the University, the QAC resolved at its 1st meeting (2013/14) that the annual submission exercise for courses to be offered in 2014/15 be extended to include programmes/courses at the sub-degree level (Please refer to (m) SEN/13-14/2/R 2).

Disallowing mixed-mode of MOI

19. The Guidelines on the implementation of MOI policy for 2014/15 was refined based on the recommendations of the Senate, QAC and academic units consolidated from the experience in processing the applications for exemption in the previous round of ULP submission for 2013/14. One of the refinements was that applications for the intended adoption of mixed-mode of MOI would NOT be allowed and the academic units should declare the dominant MOI for the courses concerned. Nevertheless, the proposal for offering courses in more than one MOI section to provide different choices of MOI for students would be welcomed (Please refer to (m) SEN/13-14/2/R 2).

Combining the annual planning of MOI with Teaching Assignment

20. Although MOI of courses should be determined on the basis of academic merits in line with the course pedagogical design instead of the availability of faculty members, it would be desirable to conduct the annual planning of MOI of courses together with the teaching assignment (TA) at the Faculty/Programme level to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in a holistic manner. As such, Faculties/Schools and AVA are

requested to submit the MOI plans along with the TA plans in early April each year, and the corresponding LPI Plans from 2014/15 onwards could then be prepared by making reference to the MOI plans (Please refer to (n) SEN/13-14/3/R 1).

2014/15

Inclusion of Offshore programmes/classes in the submission of LPI and MOI Plans

21. Commencing the submission exercise for 2015/16, offshore programmes/classes were included in the annual submission of LPI Plan and MOI Plans (Please refer to (o) SEN/14-15/2/R 1).

2015/16

MOI Statistics at Department level

22. Along with the MOI statistics collected at Faculty level, the statistics table for Departmental MOI data was added to the template for *LPI Plan* to collect the relevant data at Departmental level for submission for AY2016/17.

Holistic Review of ULP

23. At the 4th Senate meeting (2015/16) held in June 2016, the President of the Students' Union proposed revoking the Putonghua requirement for graduation following a student poll in favour of the issue. The Chairman of the Senate then commissioned the QAC to initiate a review plan for a holistic examination of the ULP. Accordingly, a ULP review and the proposal to establish a Task Force under the QAC to conduct the Review was approved by the Senate at its 6th meeting (2015/16). The Review should commence in AY2016/17 (Please refer to (p) SEN/15-16/6/B 6).

Quality Assurance Committee

14 October 2016