

**Response to Commonly Asked Questions on the
Preliminary Proposal of
the QAC Task Force on Review of University Language Policy**

- 1) Will ALL GE courses be taught in English?

NO.

There is an on-going review on the GE curriculum and a suggestion of organizing GE courses into different levels has been put forward. If the suggestion is approved, then the proposal here is that **ONLY** the Level 1 GE courses will be taught in English **by 2021**. (*Concrete Action (1), p.4¹*). Some of the higher level GE courses may be taught in Putonghua or Cantonese for academic or educational reasons.

During the latest consultation, it has been suggested that even some of the Level 1 GE courses may be taught in Putonghua or Cantonese for academic or educational reasons. The Task Force will consider this.

- 2) Why is Putonghua maintained as a graduation requirement?

The Task Force is of the view that it is essential for BU graduates to possess the basic ability to communicate in Putonghua. On a gradual approach, graduates may achieve mastery in the two world languages (English and Putonghua) which allow them not only to communicate more effectively as proud inheritors of the Chinese origins of humanistic learning locally but also as whole persons contributing to the knowledge-based economy on the global stage. (*Justification, p.2 and Affirmation (3), p.3*)

- 3) Will the University keep the same graduation requirement in Putonghua as of today?

NO.

The Task Force suggests that the Third Class, Grade A or above in the Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi (在國家語委普通話水平測試取得三級甲等或以上) will no longer be kept as the exemption criterion.

Instead, the Task Force suggests the Language Centre design a new Diagnostic cum Exemption Test which will focus on students' ability to communicate in Putonghua. Students who cannot pass the test and fail to meet the other exemption criteria will be asked to take a credit-bearing Putonghua course which will be offered in the direction of specific purposes such as career training and intercultural awareness. The teaching of *pinyin* will be made strictly and

¹ Reference to the relevant section(s) and page number(s) in the Preliminary Proposal in brackets

apparently relevant to applicable in-class pedagogies and objectives. The Task Force further suggests that students may choose i) to include the result of this course in the calculation of the cumulative GPA or ii) to be assessed on a distinction/pass/fail basis. *(Concrete Action (2), p.4 and Appendix 4)*

- 4) Does the University adopt English as MOI just because it wants to cater for international students?

NO.

Internationalization is for the benefit of **ALL** BU students. International perspectives and intercultural awareness remain crucial to the fulfillment of our University's mission. BU needs to prepare BU students for a fulfilling personal and professional life in the highly globalized world in which they will be able to work with peoples from all over the world for job assignments and to make contribution to solving global problems. *(Preamble, Justification and Rationale, p.2-3)*

To achieve this goal, BU has to create a diversified and multicultural learning environment on the campus so that students can learn and benefit from other students who have very different cultural backgrounds from theirs. The use of English in class is one key element for fostering such a learning environment. *(Recommendations (1), (3), p.3 and Concrete Action (1), p.4)*

Besides, the use of English as MOI can also prepare **ALL** BU students for exchange programmes, internships, study tours or other learning experiences outside Hong Kong.

Under all circumstances, whether it is under the existing or proposed language policy, programmes or courses may be taught in Chinese or a language other than English for academic and educational reasons. *(Paras 3b-d, Appendix 2)*

- 5) Why can't the University offer the same courses in Chinese and English respectively for Chinese and non-Chinese speaking students?

Separating students of different cultural backgrounds into different classes will defeat the purpose of promoting intercultural exchange and collaboration among students. *(Recommendation 1, p.3)*

- 6) Is the University despising Cantonese?

NO.

The Task Force maintains that there should be a strong commitment to Cantonese language, literature, and cultural heritage. *(Affirmation (4), p.3)* It suggests the University formally establish a Cantonese-language learning programme of depth, practicality, and interest for all non-Cantonese-speaking students. *(Concrete Action (7), p.5)* It also suggests the establishment of a steering committee to explore the future viability and feasibility of an academic

concentration (and, eventually, a degree-granting programme) in Cantonese language, literature, and culture. (*Concrete Action (6), p.5*)

- 7) Has the University overlooked the importance of languages other than Chinese and English?

NO.

The Language Centre has been offering both credit and non-credit bearing foreign language courses to BU students. Last year, more than 2,000 students took credit-bearing courses in one of the four foreign languages: French, German, Japanese and Spanish. The Language Centre has also been running Minor Programmes in these four languages.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of other languages. It proposes to further enhance “other Language” learning and curricula on campus. (*Concrete Action (10), p.5*)

QAC Task Force on
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