



## Vice-Chancellor's Decision

No 19/19

2019-02-18

Ref.no C2019/198

**Matter:** Karlstad University's Language Policy

**Officer:** Arvid Dahlgren

### **Background**

Karlstad University is an open institution of higher education, committed to creating, integrating, applying, disseminating and preserving knowledge globally and locally. This mission requires effective use and choice of language. Good and purposeful use of language is vital to a nationally and internationally competitive institution and is an important part of the university's quality assurance. Karlstad University participates actively in international settings through various channels in which communication takes place in other languages than Swedish, particularly in English. The university's ambition to adapt information and communication to a global world affects our use and choice of language. In the light of increasing internationalisation, a greater awareness of the role and importance of Swedish in the exercise of authority and imparting knowledge is important. As a government agency, Karlstad University has a particular responsibility to ensure that Swedish terminology is accessible, applied and developed in the university's various areas of expertise (SFS 2009:600).

Karlstad University's Language Policy clarifies principles and approaches to promote good language use. The aim is also to increase awareness of the importance and use of language among employees and students. The policy is part of the quality assurance that relate to language use and the view of language, and shall function as a tool in the day-to-day work. The language policy also offers guidelines to comply with the laws that regulate language use within the university as a government agency.

### **Co-determination Act**

**information/**

**negotiation:** No

### **Decision**

The Vice-Chancellor decided to adopt Karlstad University's Language Policy.

Johan Sterte decided in this matter and Arvid Dahlgren prepared the case. Thomas Blom, pro-vice chancellor, Margareta Friman, pro-vice-chancellor, Anne-Christine Larsson Ljung, university director, and Sebastian Hardin, student union chair, were part of the concluding process without contributing to the final decision.

*A signed original is kept by the registry*

Johan Sterte

Arvid Dahlgren

A copy of the decision has been sent to:

- The registry
- The faculties
- Heads of the University Administration and Central Services

## Language policy

### General background

The status of the Swedish language is regulated by the Language Act (SFS 2009:600 sects 1-13). According to this act, government agencies have a ‘special responsibility for ensuring that Swedish terminology in their various areas of expertise is accessible and that it is used and developed’ (sect.12) and the language ‘is to be cultivated, simple and comprehensible’ (sect. 11). It is therefore important that the university’s employees and students maintain and develop Swedish terminology and can inform others as well as discuss their knowledge in a clear and comprehensible manner. The university also needs to be able to communicate in languages other than Swedish with regards to internationalisation and inclusion.

The university recommends the following two publications:

- Myndigheternas skrivregler [Public Sector Writing Manual]  
<http://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/om-oss/publikationer/institutets-publikationer/sprakvard/2016-09-14-myndigheternas-skrivregler.html>
- Svarta listan – ord och fraser som kan ersättas i författningsspråk [Black List: Words and Phrases to Omit in Legal Texts]  
<https://www.regeringen.se/rapporter/2011/10/pm-20111/>

Other policy documents also emphasise the importance of internationalisation to increase global mobility in education and work (e.g. 13/18 Decision on Karlstad University’s Strategy 2030). The choice of language is above all a question of to what extent and in what form and context English, or any other language, can be used on its own or parallel to Swedish. One of the university’s goals is increased international mobility among employees and students, and English is often the language used in research. This requires good knowledge of English as well as careful thought to ensure the usefulness of the Swedish language and its development of the terminology.

The university aims to ensure a high level of accessibility for everyone through various efforts in the form of IT support, audiobooks, text to speech, etc. Information on the university’s websites shall be available according to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, WCAG. Students and employees with functional challenges are offered special support to enable them to complete their studies or work and participate in the university’s activities.

Recommended links:

- Myndigheten för delaktighet kunskapsområde Tillgänglighet, information och kommunikation funktionsnedsättning [The Swedish Agency for Participation, Accessibility, information and communication for people with functional challenges]  
<http://www.mfd.se/kunskapsomraden/tillganglighet/tillganglig-information-och-kommunikation/#link2>
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, WCAG  
<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>
- Karlstads universitet, Funktionsnedsättning och studier [Karlstad University, Disability and studies] <https://www.kau.se/student/ar-student/stod-under-studierna/framgangsrika-studier/funktionsnedsattning-och-studier>

**Language guidelines for the university as a government agency and workplace**

Karlstad University is a Swedish government agency, regulated by laws and ordinances written in Swedish. Consequently, the language of proceedings is Swedish and local public agency decisions shall be made and written in Swedish. In a case when the decision directly affects a non-Swedish speaking person or a person with special needs, a translation shall be made into English. All strategic documents, rules and guidelines shall be written in Swedish and translated into English, entirely or in an abridged form of them, and to the extent possible using the variant British English. The Swedish original is always the binding legal document and takes precedent over the English translation.

Doctoral positions, permanent teaching positions for which a doctoral degree is required and fixed-term career development positions should always be advertised in Swedish and English. All applicants have the right to apply in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English. Multi-language skills are added qualifications in all recruitment at the university, and the competence to teach in English shall normally be required for appointment as a teacher.

Since Karlstad University is a Swedish government agency, the language of meetings shall normally be Swedish. This applies to the meetings of all preparatory and decision-making bodies, but is also to be considered in department and section meetings. Exceptions to the rule may be made when one or more participants are not familiar with Swedish. A recommendation would be to use presentation slides in English and speak in Swedish to facilitate understanding, participation and influence. Participants may use English to make a statement if they feel that they can convey their opinion better in English.

Karlstad University is to a great extent an international workplace, with a responsibility to ensure that all employees can understand and participate in many activities. Therefore, it is important that language barriers are removed through creating an environment that, on the one hand, is characterised by parallel linguistic competence when possible, and on the other, provide language support in Swedish and English as far as possible.

**Language guidelines in education**

All education at Karlstad University shall support the students' language skills in speech and writing in terms of comprehensibility as well as terminological application. According to the Higher Education Ordinance, communicative skills are a learning requirement for academic qualifications at undergraduate, master and doctoral levels. Education at master and doctoral levels taught in Swedish also requires students to be able to communicate in international settings and with an enhanced command of terminology.

Degree programmes and courses at all levels at Karlstad University shall prepare students for an international mobile labour market, for example, through measures encouraging and supporting 'parallel' linguistic competence, that is, the skills to use academic language in speech and writing in Swedish as well as in English. Degree programmes offered in Swedish at all levels shall include components that enhance such skills. Master-level programmes taught in English shall comprise components that provide opportunities for students to develop their skills in using academic language in English. Multilingualism shall be encouraged.

In the university's rules for education at undergraduate and master levels (C2017/188 chap. 5 sect. 6) it is stated that: 'If specified before the application that a course will be held in "Swedish or English", it should as a general rule be held in English. However, in the event that only Swedish-speaking students are admitted, the course may be held in Swedish. In all other cases, the language of instruction may not be changed once the application is open. "Swedish or English" as the language of instruction means that courses may include components of both languages, but that Swedish is a requirement for admission. Other Scandinavian languages are considered equivalent to Swedish in terms of admission requirements.'

Independent projects (degree theses, academic papers) at all levels may be written in a language that is common in a disciplinary research tradition, provided that supervision and/or other resources are available. Foreign language courses are normally taught in the language concerned and independent projects are written in the respective language. The range of courses offered shall meet the requests made in the university's agreements with universities abroad.

Programme and course syllabi and other general information of education at all levels shall be available in Swedish and English. The language of instruction shall be stated for each course date and the possible languages of instruction shall be stated in the syllabus. Students are offered individual tutoring in writing and opportunities to develop their academic writing skills in Swedish and English.

Guidelines for education at *undergraduate level*:

- Courses shall normally be offered in Swedish.
- Courses may be offered in another language when appropriate.
- Subject-specific degree courses offered in Swedish shall provide opportunities for students to acquire the relevant terminology also in English.
- Degree theses may be written in Swedish/other Scandinavian language, English or another language in the disciplinary research tradition.
- Degree theses shall have a title and abstract in Swedish and other Scandinavian language, English or another language in the disciplinary research tradition.
- Subject-specific degree courses shall normally include course literature in Swedish and English.

Guidelines for education at *Master's level*:

- When relevant course literature is available in English, it should be used to the extent possible.
- Courses offered in Swedish shall ensure that students master the relevant terminology in the field also in English.
- Degree theses may be written in Swedish/other Scandinavian language, English or another language in the disciplinary research tradition.
- Degree theses shall have a title and abstract in Swedish and in another language.

Guidelines for education at *doctoral level*:

- Doctoral and licentiate theses may be written in English, Swedish/other Scandinavian language or another language in the disciplinary research tradition.
- Doctoral and licentiate theses shall have a title and abstract in Swedish and another language.

- Education at doctoral level shall include training in communicating research problems and results to the public and the research community, nationally and internationally.
- Cross-faculty courses shall primarily be offered in English.

### **Language guidelines for research and development**

Karlstad University wants to contribute to knowledge development at the local, regional and global level. In terms of research this means disseminating results and ideas to the international research community in the customary language of the respective research traditions, as well as to the Swedish public and external partners in a comprehensible way with relevant terminology. The principle of parallel linguistic competence shall apply also in the area of research. Research communication includes, besides publishing one's own research in academic contexts, conveying knowledge and results in a broad-ranging and comprehensible way, and co-operating with different actors in society. In order to meet the requirement of disseminating information about their research and engaging with various actors in society, researchers need to develop their Swedish language use. There are many situations in which research presentations need to be held in Swedish and reach a broad audience.

All researchers and teachers have a responsibility to contribute to the development of subject specific language in Swedish, and the university as a government agency has a responsibility to ensure that Swedish terminology within different subject areas is accessible, applied and developed (SFS 2009:600).

According to the Higher Education Act, it is part of the university's obligations to co-operate with the surrounding community and disseminate information about its activities, as well as ensuring that the research results of the university are put to good use. It is important that the knowledge of disciplinary research domains is spread and discussed broadly in society. This is not only an issue of knowledge but to a great extent a democratic principle involving every individual's right to participation and responsibility in public discourse and debate.

Guidelines for *research and development*:

- All researchers have the right to choose the language for publishing their research.
- Researchers should, when needed, be offered language support for research publication in English and Swedish, as far as possible.
- All researchers shall contribute to the development of Swedish terminology in their respective fields.
- In addition to publishing their research in scientific contexts, the role of the researcher also includes disseminating knowledge and results in an accessible and comprehensible way.

### **Language guidelines for internal and external communication**

Communication within the Karlstad University organisation and with the world at large shall be factual, relevant, credible and linguistically correct. Language use shall always be cultivated, simple and comprehensible. The Institute for Language and Folklore's interpretation of section eleven of Sweden's Language Act reads:

'Cultivated language use means that it should follow the recommendations of the official language planning body and be comprehensible to the individual recipient. This requires a simple language, that is, a language with a simple and clear grammatical structure without words that are difficult to understand. Comprehensible language use means that it should be adapted so that the recipient is able to understand. The graphic design should also be simple and clear. Special communication needs of different groups should also, as far as possible, be taken into account, for example people with a mother tongue other than Swedish and people with disabilities.'

General information about the university on the website kau.se and in printed material shall be available in Swedish and English. Organisational terms, signs, policy and regulation documents, complete or abridged, shall also be available in Swedish and English. Regardless of channel, parallel linguistic competence is our aim.

As far as possible, all texts in English shall be checked for accuracy and correctness before being published or made public in any other way. British English shall be used to harmonise with translated legal texts in the area of education, with the Swedish Council for Higher Education's Swedish-English dictionary for higher education, and with EU practise.

Recommended links:

- <https://www.uhr.se/om-uhr/nyheter/2017/ordboken-uppdaterad2/>