

LANGUAGE POLICY

1. General

The guiding principle underpinning the Language Policy at Lingnan University is the provision of a high quality bilingual (Chinese/English) personnel for Hong Kong. The community at large, and the business community in particular, requires a bilingual workforce if Hong Kong is to maintain its competitive edge over other Southeast Asian regions as the focal point of international trade. The institution shares the view that there is an urgent need to enhance language proficiency in both Chinese and English in Hong Kong generally and in educational institutions in particular. It further believes that the maintenance of high levels of language proficiency will remain an on-going central focus.

2. Medium of Instruction

English and Chinese are the two official languages of Hong Kong. In line with the mission of the University to become a distinctive liberal arts university of international repute, the University has adopted a policy of internationalisation of its student body. In view of the need for Hong Kong to remain cosmopolitan and for our students to be prepared to engage in an increasingly globalised society, it is essential that the University provides a cross-cultural learning environment that promotes international exposure and understanding. The University recognises the importance of English as an international lingua franca.

In this light, apart from language courses, courses in the Chinese and Translation Departments, and some courses specially approved to be taught in Chinese, all courses are normally taught in English, although Cantonese and/or Putonghua may be used supplementarily as well, as appropriate.

3. Entry Levels

Lingnan University requires students to have at least Grade E in both Use of English and Chinese Language and Culture at the Advanced Supplementary (AS) level or equivalent. Under the 3-3-4 education system, the minimum entrance requirement is level 3 for both English Language and Chinese Language at the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination, or equivalent.

The University is committed to enforcing this entrance requirement policy on language proficiency.

In the case of non-JUPAS entrants where candidates may have very different educational backgrounds, the University reserves the right to exercise its freedom and judgement in offering a study place. However, to protect the legitimate interests of the community and the integrity of high level language proficiency, all such candidates are required to show evidence of linguistic proficiency commensurate with tertiary level study.

4. Exit Levels

To ensure graduates attain an appropriate level of competency in English before graduation, the University institutes an English language graduation requirement. Students admitted in the 2017-18 academic year or after (except for those admitted to Year 3 in 2017-18) shall attain a minimum overall band score in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (or an equivalent qualification) before they can graduate.

In addition, all students, and particularly final year students, are encouraged to take language tests on a voluntary basis in order to establish their levels of proficiency in Putonghua and written Chinese at exit from the University. These tests are general proficiency tests aimed at providing information on students' language proficiency levels to themselves, their teachers and their future employers.

For Putonghua, students can take the Putonghua Proficiency Test (PSC), designed by China National Language Commission (CNLC) and administered in Lingnan, as the Lingnan University Oral Chinese Test. For the Written Chinese Proficiency Test, students can take the University's own test, which was designed with and accredited by the CNLC via a collaborative research effort. The results of tests are printed in separate certificates, which are designed to provide employers with a useful reference as an additional qualification for job applications.

Further information about language proficiency tests can be obtained from the Centre for English and Additional Languages (CEAL) and the Chinese Language Education and Assessment Centre (CLEAC).

5. The Place of English and Chinese in the Curriculum

To ensure that students meet the language targets established in the University's curriculum, the provision of English language courses is guaranteed in all degree programmes and students are required to take English courses to enhance their language proficiency.

There is also the issue of the importance of language across the curriculum. The University accepts that studying an academic discipline in a language not one's own (i.e. English) puts added strain on the learning process. Academic departments should nominate one staff member to liaise closely with CEAL in an effort to sensitise teaching staff to problem areas and to consider strategies for remediation.

Academic programmes (except for BA Chinese) should introduce some elements of English language assessment in their assessments or/and final examinations so as to instill in students the requirement of effective and accurate communication in the workplace.

It is noted that the spoken Chinese in Hong Kong is the Cantonese dialect but that the written form follows the grammatical rules of Putonghua. With increasingly frequent exchanges between Hong Kong and the mainland, raising the proficiency level of university students' Putonghua will further enhance their employability and competitiveness in their future workplaces. Accordingly, the University emphasises the importance of teaching Chinese writing skills so as to enable students to deal effectively with Chinese communication.

The University also recognises the increasing need for graduates with an adequate command of Putonghua to serve in the business and government arenas, and notes the Hong Kong Government's support to broaden the provision of Putonghua in the school curriculum. The test in spoken Putonghua is set at a standard equivalent to the third paper (oral test) of the SAR Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (Putonghua).

6. Language Enhancement Initiatives

In a determined effort to improve language proficiency in English and Chinese, all UGC-funded institutions receive substantial extra funds. The University supplements these funds with its own resources to provide a rich array of language activities for maximizing learning experience, boosting learner's interest, and addressing individual learning needs.

The University employs these funds to provide extra classroom teaching in general English, Putonghua and written Chinese for students. In addition, the English Language Support Service (ELSS) provides a unique and invaluable learning environment for all students at Lingnan University offering a variety of formal and informal extra-curricular language programmes and activities designed to enhance and improve their use of English both academically and socially. The Multimedia and Language Learning Centre (which incorporates other language learning initiatives) is staffed and resourced through language enhancement funds and encourages in students self-responsibility for language improvement in English and Chinese as well as in other languages.

The University constantly seeks other ways to use these funds to the best advantage.

7. Language Choice in University Meetings

In line with current conventions in Hong Kong tertiary education, the language in which University meetings are conducted will remain in English. However, there are occasions when the use of Chinese may be preferred, especially in connection with student participation, and the University accepts in principle the use of Chinese as a working language. This is subject to appropriate notification of intent to use Chinese and the availability of appropriate translation services for non-Chinese speakers.

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