LINGNAN UNIVERSITY
Policy on Language of Instruction
for Undergraduate Programmes

1. Our mission aims to become a distinctive liberal arts university of international repute. When formulating the policy on language of instruction, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration. These include English being an international lingua franca (especially in the commercial and academic sectors), as well as the need for Hong Kong to remain cosmopolitan and for our students to be prepared to engage in an increasingly globalised society. On the other hand, with the internationalisation of student body, there are a growing number of non-local students on campus, both on exchanges and as full-time degree-seeking students in our undergraduate programmes. It is essential that the University, with our liberal arts mission, provides a cross-cultural learning environment that promotes international exposure and understanding.

2. In this light, apart from language courses and courses in the Chinese and Translation Departments, all courses are normally taught in English. In addition, when Chinese is used for Chinese/translation courses, it should be specified whether it is in Cantonese or Putonghua. In case it is deemed necessary to supplement the teaching with some Cantonese/Putonghua to make it more effective, instructors should ensure that non-Cantonese or non-Putonghua speaking students will not be disadvantaged. By adhering to this university policy, no exchange or non-local students will be excluded from taking courses of their choice merely because of the language barrier.

3. In the Chinese and Translation Departments, due consideration should be given to non-Cantonese speaking students from the Chinese Mainland by offering sufficient first-year courses taught in Putonghua. Furthermore, the Chinese Department and the Translation Department are strongly encouraged to offer a few courses entirely in English for the benefit of international students and Chinese Major students.

4. Nevertheless, the University is fully aware of the situation that there are courses for which the majority of reading materials are in Chinese to which there are no acceptable alternatives and/or the teaching and learning will not be effective if the language of instruction is English. For such courses, the instructors shall apply via their Heads of Departments[Note] for teaching the courses in Chinese (specifying Cantonese or Putonghua). The applications endorsed by the Department Board (for BA programmes offered by departments under the Faculty of Arts), the Undergraduate Business Programmes Committee (for BBA programmes) or the respective Programme and Curriculum Committees (for other programmes) will be

[Note] For some courses in the undergraduate programmes under the Wu Jieh Yee School of Interdisciplinary Studies which are directly offered by the School, the role of Head of Department is taken up by the Programme Director of respective undergraduate programme. The role of a Head of Department is taken up by the Person-in-Charge of the Division concerned.

presented for consideration by the Academic Quality Assurance Committee for Undergraduate Programmes (AQAC) by March of the preceding academic year and approval can be granted by the Senate[#] for these courses to be taught in Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua).

[#] The Senate has delegated the approval authority to the AQAC since the 2008-09 academic year.

5. Apart from those abovementioned courses that **shall be** taught in Chinese, some courses with language of instruction specified as English **can be** switched to be taught in Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) for pedagogic reasons and with pre-approval. The instructors shall apply for pre-approval from the AQAC via their Heads of Departments by March of the year for possible switch of the language of instruction to Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) after the add/drop period in each term. (Note: Generally, this pre-approval requirement does not apply to courses offered by the Chinese and Translation Departments as the normally taught in English principle does not apply to them. This requirement only applies to courses which are designated to be taught in English entirely by the two departments.

6. Due to the fact that a methodology course covers basic knowledge for certain disciplines and often addresses issues of universal concern, the application for switching the language of instruction to Chinese for methodology courses shall normally not be allowed, except for the Chinese Department.

7. The language of instruction to be used by each course and, for courses that have obtained pre-approval as stated in paragraph 5 above, the potential for switch to Chinese (specifying Cantonese or Putonghua) shall be clearly indicated in the Class Schedules published for each term for information and reference of students. Apart from the Class Schedules, the following details should be clearly spelt out in the relevant programme materials (e.g. course descriptions) for information and reference of students:

   (a) Courses using a specified language of instruction other than English (in the case of Chinese, Cantonese or Putonghua); and
   (b) Courses that require students to have working knowledge* of language(s) other than the specified language of instruction, i.e. the language requirement including that for the teaching materials.

   * Working knowledge refers to basic ability to read and understand the language as for example there may be courses taught in English with substantial portion of reading materials in Chinese.

8. For courses with pre-approval of switch, after the student course add/drop period in each term, the course/section** can be switched to be taught in Cantonese or Putonghua if

(a) there is no student who does not understand Cantonese or Putonghua which is to be used after the switch; and
(b) at least two-thirds of students in the class favour the switch (via secret ballot) and the instructor agrees to the switch.

** For courses adopting sectional approach, the switch of language of instruction can be adopted for individual section.

However, assignments and examinations for those courses switched from English to Chinese should ideally be in English, even when readings and classes are in Chinese, i.e. only the teaching language in classes is switched, not the language used in the assignments and examinations.

Instructors should report the switch to the relevant Head of Department who will inform the Registry all of the switches in the department.

9. It is mandatory for instructors to confirm the language(s) of instruction at the first session of class. The published language(s) of instruction should be adhered to throughout the term, except for those courses/sections switched to Cantonese or Putonghua after the add/drop period with pre-approval.

10. Heads of Departments should report courses where the language of instruction was switched to Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) to the Department Boards (for BA programmes offered by departments under the Faculty of Arts), the Undergraduate Business Programmes Committee (for BBA programmes) or the respective Programme and Curriculum Committees (for other programmes). Registry shall report the switches to the AQAC and the Senate annually for reference.

11. For a course that was approved to be taught in Chinese (Cantonese/Putonghua) across terms as stipulated under paragraph 4 above but needs to be reverted to be taught in English, an application endorsed by the Department Board (for BA programmes offered by departments under the Faculty of Arts), the Undergraduate Business Programmes Committee (for BBA programmes) or the respective Programme and Curriculum Committees (for other programmes) shall be submitted to the AQAC by March of the preceding academic year.

12. For a course which applied for pre-approval for switch of language of instruction for consecutive 5 years, the Department Board (for BA programmes offered by departments under the Faculty of Arts), the Undergraduate Business Programmes Committee (for BBA programmes) or the respective Programme and Curriculum Committees (for other programmes) shall review if the course '**shall be** taught in Chinese across terms' or kept under '**can be** taught in Chinese' and seek pre-approval of switch for each term. The Head of Department should submit the decision of the

review to the AQAC with justifications given by November of the next academic year for AQAC's decision. The AQAC will decide if the course should become '**shall be** taught in Chinese across terms' or kept under '**can be** taught in Chinese'. For a course that is kept under '**can be** taught in Chinese', it is subject to the review after seeking pre-approval switch of language of instruction for consecutive 5 years.

13. In addition, any changes related to language of instruction of courses in a programme (apart from those on the Core Curriculum and Chinese/English enhancement courses) should be reported in the annual programme reports as well as the five-year programme review documents to reflect that the changes are anomalies with reasons given.

(Note: This policy is applicable to all undergraduate courses.)

Revisions approved in February 2026