

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Guidelines, Policies and Procedures

Policy Name	AKU Language Policy
Policy #	043
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Contact	Office of the Provost

Preamble

The Aga Khan University (AKU) operates in countries which are linguistically rich and diverse. National and local languages are extensively used across AKU and form an integral part of the cultural identity of those who study and work at AKU, and of the people AKU serves. As an institution with a strong social and cultural ethos, AKU respects and values the use and preservation of national and local languages.

The common language across AKU is English. This is because historical and contemporary factors have led to English becoming the dominant global language for higher education and professional training purposes. English is the primary language at AKU for learning, teaching and assessment, conducting formal business, and the recording of formal records.

The University recognizes that, because English is not the first language of most of those who study or work at AKU or those it serves, the use of English as a common language presents challenges to the University in terms of achieving its mission and vision, and operating in accordance to its values of impact, relevance, access and quality. There is a challenge in ensuring sufficient competency levels in English to operate at international standards and in ensuring that the use of English does not create a barrier to study or work at AKU, or for the people AKU serves.

In recognition of these challenges, the University established a Language Policy Thinking Group (LPTG) in October 2016. The remit of the LPTG was to examine the issues related to the use of English and other languages across AKU and to provide an evidence base for the development of an AKU Language Policy. The AKU Language Policy is informed by the main findings and recommendations of the LPTG Report.

1. Aims

The aims of the AKU Language Policy are:

- To clarify the role and expected use of English and other languages across AKU
- To establish a framework for addressing the language challenge at AKU and build the language capacity required to achieve AKU's mission and vision, and operate in accordance to its values

2. Guiding principles

The AKU Language Policy adheres to the following principles.

- 2.1. The fulfilment of AKU's mission and vision and compliance with regulatory requirements are the primary considerations regarding language use, competency requirements, and development needs.
- 2.2. English is the common language of AKU. High levels of English are required to operate at international standards in learning, teaching and assessment, and for conducting formal business at AKU.
- 2.3. The University recognizes the challenges of having English as a common language, especially with regard to its values of quality and access. AKU is committed to building English language capacity to ensure international standards are not compromised, and to providing opportunities to enhance English language competency to widen access to study and work opportunities at AKU.
- 2.4. The University recognizes that it operates in regions with rich and diverse linguistic heritages. It respects and values the use of national and local languages. It is also committed to ensuring that the role of English as a common language does not undermine the relevancy and impact of its work.
- 2.5. The University recognizes that a common standard is needed to refer to and describe language competencies and requirements for study and work purposes at AKU. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is the most established international standard for comparing language levels and describing language competencies. The CEFR will be used for these purposes at AKU.

3. Language use in learning, teaching and assessment

- 3.1. English is the expected language of learning, teaching and assessment across AKU.
- 3.2. In situations where no student is excluded linguistically, national or local languages may be used in a limited and judicious manner. The rationale for this allowance is to foster the learning/teaching process and to enable students to transition fully to the use of English for learning, teaching and assessment purposes.
- 3.3. Students admitted to AKU academic programmes will have a level of English which is sufficient to cope with English medium study at the commencement of their studies. This level will be benchmarked against the CEFR and it will be comparable to relevant international admissions standards. The levels will be stipulated in programme specifications and documents relating to admission requirements.
- 3.4. Academic programmes will be designed, delivered and assessed with due consideration of the English language ability of the students. This consideration will be evident in formal documentation relating to programme design, course design, study materials, teaching methods and assessment strategies.

- 3.5. Students are expected to develop their English language skills during their studies at AKU, and all students will have a minimum level of English equivalent to a high B2 in the CEFR upon successful completion of their studies.
- 3.6. The University will ensure that there is sufficient provision for supporting the development of the students' English language skills during their studies at AKU.
- 3.7. AKU will have a consistent approach for dealing with English language for assessment and thesis supervision purposes. The emphasis of this approach will be to provide feedback which helps students develop their English language skills and to comply with the AKU academic integrity policy.
- 3.8. Faculty will have a level of English language that enables them to teach and assess effectively through the medium of English. The minimum level required is a high B2 in the CEFR.
- 3.9. Faculty will have access to training and development opportunities designed to enhance their English language skills and ability to teach and assess effectively through the medium of English.

4. Language use in research activities

- 4.1. English is the expected language of most activities related to research and the dissemination of research findings within the academic community.
- 4.2. Faculty, students and staff will have access to training and development opportunities to enhance the English language skills required for research-related activities in the medium of English, including the dissemination of research findings.
- 4.3. Faculty, students and staff engaged in research and publication activities in areas of strategic importance to AKU will have access to professional English language proofreading services.
- 4.4. AKU will have a consistent approach with regard to editing and proofreading support for student theses to ensure fairness across AKU and compliance with the AKU academic integrity policy.
- 4.5. AKU acknowledges and values publications and other forms of dissemination of research findings in national and local languages, especially for the purposes of community engagement, relevancy and impact. Support will be available for interpretation and translation services in these languages for research in areas of strategic importance to AKU.

5. Language use in the workplace

- 5.1. English is the expected language for formal meetings and other formal business of AKU.

- 5.2. AKU employees engaged in formal meetings and business are expected to have sufficient competency in English language to function effectively through the medium of English in these situations, equivalent to a minimum level of a high B2 in the CEFR.
- 5.3. Provision will be available for AKU employees to develop their English language competency for work purposes and to enhance their career prospects at AKU.
- 5.4. All formal documents of the University for AKU employees will be written in English. Translations of these documents will be available in the relevant national languages as required.
- 5.5. All employees at AKU will be expected to have basic language skills (A1 in the CEFR) in the national language of the country they are working in. AKU will make provision for language training in these languages to at least an A1 level in the CEFR.

6. Language use in public communication

- 6.1. All information on the AKU website will be available in English.
- 6.2. An excellent standard of English (at least C1 in the CEFR) is required for all written content on the AKU website.
- 6.3. Where sections of the website are aimed at audiences unlikely to understand written English, translations will be available in the relevant languages.
- 6.4. All written documents intended for a public audience (forms, flyers etc.) will be written in the language(s) the audience is most likely to understand.
- 6.5. All public announcements will be in English and national languages as applicable.
- 6.6. All signage will be in English and national languages as applicable.

7. Implementation, monitoring and review

- 7.1. An AKU Language Policy Committee will be established to oversee, monitor and review the implementation of the Language Policy.
- 7.2. AKU will ensure there is adequate provision and resources to implement the Language Policy.
- 7.3. The Language Policy Committee will report annually to the AKU Executive Committee on steps taken to implement the Language Policy.
- 7.4. There will be a four-year periodic review of the Language Policy.