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Annex to: Vice-Chancellor's decision on language policy at SLU, 21/6/2016

## Language policy at SLU

### Introduction

Increased internationalisation has given English a strong position in Swedish higher education institutions. In several scientific fields, basically all types of communication and publications are in English. English is also becoming more common in teaching. This increases the university's international competitiveness and is therefore positive.

Meanwhile, research shows that people who receive information in their mother tongue understand and remember more than if the information is in a foreign language, even if it is a language the recipient speaks well. Therefore, it is also important to uphold Swedish as means of communication.

Increased usage of English as a teaching language also involves the risk that Swedish loses ground as a scientific language. In the long-term, this may result in domain loss; some fields of knowledge cannot be communicated in Swedish because there is no technical language for the field. Swedish must be a complete language in scientific contexts if we are to be able to communicate with the surrounding society.

Therefore, it is important to establish SLU as a Swedish-speaking university. Swedish is also the language that should be used in the university's administrative work. In all operations where public authority is exercised, or where SLU as an authority has an administrative obligation to perform certain operations, Swedish is also a requirement.

## The three language policy objectives

The objectives for SLU's language policy are **plain language, parallel language use** and **high linguistic quality**. To reach these objectives, there are guidelines for language use.

### Objective 1: Plain language

#### *What?*

Plain language involves writing from the recipient's perspective and to make the text available to the envisioned recipient.

#### *How?*

By adjusting the content, structure and language to the recipient and to use a language that is cultivated, simple and comprehensible.

#### *Why?*

- **Plain language results in more efficient communication.** Information which is adapted to the recipient's needs leads to more efficient communication as the risk of misunderstanding decreases. Plain language consequently makes knowledge produced at SLU more comprehensible and usable. Plain language also makes the information for students and employees easy to understand and to use.
- **It strengthens our brand.** Information which is comprehensible to the recipient increases the quality of communication, which strengthens the SLU brand.
- **It is an obligation.** According to the Language Act, language used in the public sector must be "cultivated, simple and comprehensible"<sup>1</sup>.

### Objective 2: Parallel language use

#### *What?*

Parallel language use signifies using Swedish and English in parallel in our operations.

#### *How?*

By following the guidelines for when to provide information in Swedish, and when to provide it in both Swedish and English.

#### *Why?*

- **Parallel language use is a prerequisite for internationalisation.** English is needed to make SLU attractive to potential foreign employees and students. Swedish employees and students need good English skills in order to be attractive on the labour market.
- **Information must be available to all who need it.** All who are active at SLU

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<sup>1</sup> SFS 2009:600, Section 12.

must have access to the information they need to perform their tasks. This means that information must be available in Swedish and English. However, SLU is a Swedish-speaking university, and Swedish is the primary language in administrative work.

- **It is needed to guarantee a satisfactory technical language in Swedish.** According to the Language Act, Swedish government agencies are responsible for making Swedish terminology available in their fields of expertise, as well as use it and develop it. Both Swedish and English must be available to communicate SLU's knowledge. This means that Swedish cannot be eliminated as a scientific language.

### Objective 3: High linguistic quality

#### *What?*

High linguistic quality means a language that is:

- **consistent**, i.e. terminology and language which are uniform and correct;
- **cultivated**, which means that the language follows the rules for language use and the official existing language recommendations, e.g. *Myndigheternas skrivregler*.

#### *How?*

By giving employees and students access to suitable language support and means of assistance which help them to write in a consistent and cultivated manner.

- **Students** get to practise written and oral production during their study period, and they also get access to subject terminology in Swedish.
- **Employees** are given the opportunity to strengthen their language skills through continued professional development. All employees are aware of the rules of language use and the recommendations they are expected to follow.

#### *Why?*

- **Students** need good language skills to be able to communicate their knowledge, both in English and in Swedish;
- **Employees** must be able to work efficiently and produce high-quality texts in both languages in an operation with parallel language use;
- a consistent and cultivated language **strengthens the trust in SLU** – as a university, government agency and workplace.