

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

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Annex to: Vice-Chancellor's decision of 19 January 2026 on rules for language use at SLU

Rules for language use at SLU

Language is our primary tool for sharing knowledge. It shapes how we understand one another, how we learn, and how we collaborate.

In all our communications, we each bear responsibility for the language we use. It must be cultivated, accessible, and inclusive. These rules specify the behaviour required to ensure a correct and consistent language and comply with applicable legal requirements¹.

Purpose and target audience

These rules are designed to ensure clarity and consistency in language matters, and to foster a positive linguistic environment for staff, students, and others who access information from SLU.

The target audience is all employees at SLU.

¹ Language Act (2009:600).

Guiding principles

The three principles that are to guide language use at SLU are cultivated language, accessible language and inclusive language.

Cultivated language

We use cultivated – to be understood as correct and consistent – language in all academic and administrative/technical communication. This means that we:

- strive for a language that aligns with the sender's professional role and the context in which the communication takes place;
- use technical terms and SLU-specific terms consistently and correctly;
- apply the SLU style guide² to all communication in SLU's own channels.

Accessible language

Everyone should be able to access our information – whether they need it in Swedish or English, and regardless of their prior knowledge and reading situation. Information from SLU should be easy to find, understand and use. This is achieved by adapting the content, structure and language to the channel and the intended audience, i.e. what is known as plain language³.

This also includes determining which language versions are needed. A translated text automatically has a new target audience, as international staff and students may need slightly different information. This means that a text in English may not need exactly the same content as the original Swedish – this needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Inclusive language

Inclusive language shows respect for people's diverse backgrounds, identities and experiences. Using inclusive language means that we:

- avoid prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory expressions;
- use gender-neutral words where appropriate;
- respects each person's choice of name and pronouns.

Correct, accessible and inclusive language facilitates communication and increases trust in the university as well as the participation of staff and students. This facilitates collaboration and strengthens SLU's brand and the image of us as a modern and welcoming university.

² <https://internt.slu.se/styleguide>.

³ ISO 24495-1:2023, Plain language – Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines.

Responsibility

University management has the overall responsibility for ensuring that language issues are considered in governance, development and quality assurance.

Management, supervisors and employees writing for broad external and internal audiences have a particular responsibility to create the conditions for, inspire and support good language use in accordance with these rules.

However, all staff share responsibility for good language use. Each department, unit and division is responsible for applying the rules in its work. They are also responsible for the quality of their texts. The language function at the Vice-Chancellor's Office offers support.

Managers

Managers at all levels should:

- encourage and support the application of the rules;
- ensure that their staff are aware of the rules and know what language support is available to them;
- ensure that new staff set aside time to familiarise themselves with the SLU style guide and plain language principles (see the language pages on the staff web);
- facilitate language training (Swedish and English) for staff who need it.

Other staff

Staff writing for broad audiences need to pay particular attention to quality and accuracy, regardless of the target audience. This applies to all staff – technical, administrative and academic. They are expected to:

- follow the rules on language use;
- apply plain language principles to make information easy to find, understand and use;
- apply the style guide in all communication in SLU's channels;
- ensure that information needed in both English and Swedish is translated and that translations are of good quality;
- reflect on whether the same information is needed in both languages or whether the content needs to be adapted to meet the needs of the target audience.

Parallel language use

Parallel language use means that two languages are used in parallel. This is different from bilingualism, which means that all information is available in two languages. SLU is a parallel-language university, and Swedish and English are our main languages.

SLU as a public authority

The Language Act⁴ states that Swedish is the official language of Sweden. The language of SLU as a public authority is therefore Swedish. As a Swedish public authority, SLU cannot require anyone to communicate with the university in languages other than Swedish.

This means, for example, that SLU cannot **require** a job application or supporting documents to be in English. If there is documentation in Swedish that needs to be translated in order to be assessed, SLU is responsible for arranging a translation.

Information that must be available in Swedish

The following must always be drawn up in Swedish:

- all documents that the university has an administrative obligation to produce;
- decisions;
- information about SLU's administrative procedures and processes;
- course and programme syllabuses.

Information that must be available in Swedish and English

Information with a broad target audience

If **all or part of the target group does not speak Swedish**, the information should be available in both Swedish and English in some form. This applies, for example, to all information where the target audience is all of SLU, all staff, all students or everyone at an SLU site.

Information can be made available in three ways:

1. Translate the whole text.
2. Translate a summary of the text.
3. Refer to other ways of accessing the same information.

Degree programmes and courses

Programmes and courses must have names in both languages. See the Education Planning and Administration Handbook, Chapter 11, for further instructions.

⁴ Language Act (2009:600).

Organisational units

All **organisational units** must have names in both Swedish and English. Names in both languages are to be established when a new entity is set up, and the names must follow the principles established by the Division of Communication.

Language versions

In other cases, the **target audience and purpose** will determine whether two language versions are needed, or if Swedish or English alone is sufficient.

As the person writing the text knows the target audience best, they are usually the best person to decide. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the sender to decide whether a translation is needed.

Keep in mind that translation always involves a new audience for the text. It is not always just translation that is needed, sometimes some other information is also needed to fulfil the needs of the target audience.

If a document has been translated, the Swedish version is the official version.
If there are differences between the Swedish and English versions, the Swedish version is legally valid. This applies to all types of information, including web pages, job adverts and internal governing documents.

Decision

Decisions must be made in Swedish, but the decision document can be bilingual.

Minutes

The items in minutes relating to decisions must be in Swedish. Apart from that, minutes can be in Swedish or English.

Internal governing documents

The sender decides if translation is needed. Any versions in English are for information purposes only.

AI-generated translation

The quality of AI-generated translation is constantly improving, but to ensure correct and, above all, consistent language, such translations need to be reviewed before they are published or otherwise disseminated.

Texts containing personal data or other sensitive information must **not** be translated using AI or any other form of machine translation.

Reviewing involves comparing the original text with the translation, rather than simply reading the translation. To assess the quality of a translation, the following is required:

- subject knowledge;
- very good knowledge of both languages;
- familiarity with textual norms and genre conventions.

More information on how AI can be used as a language tool can be found on the language pages of the staff web.

Subtitling

Subtitles are required for videos published on SLU websites for more than two weeks.

Subtitles require the same linguistic quality as other text. Therefore, if autotexting/autotranscription is used, it is necessary to review and edit the output so that the subtitles do not hinder comprehension.

Practical tips on subtitling can be found on the language pages of the staff website and on the AV support pages.

Framework agreement

There are government framework agreements for language services, procured by the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency. The agreements cover translation, revision, proofreading, transcription and subtitling.

There are three agreements:

- language services for Swedish;
- translation Swedish to/from English;
- translation Swedish to/from other languages.

Please note that SLU, as a public authority, must use the framework agreement when purchasing language services. More information is available on avropa.se and on the staff web.

Choice of language

Meetings

All meeting participants must feel included. Everyone has the right to use whichever language they are most comfortable with: Swedish or English. It is the responsibility of the meeting chairs to ensure that all participants are included, and they should summarise what has been said orally, or assign another participant to do so if necessary. Meeting invitations must specify the main language to be used at the meeting.

Preparatory and decision-making meetings

As a general rule, meetings of preparatory and decision-making bodies must be held in Swedish, since SLU, as a public authority, must make decisions in Swedish. Participants in such meetings must be able to read supporting documentation in Swedish.

For the language of meeting minutes, see *Minutes*.

Academic ceremonies

The main language of SLU's academic ceremonies is **Swedish**.

Participants giving speeches, keynote lectures or similar can choose to do so in Swedish or English. Sweden is a signatory to the Nordic Language Convention and as such has committed to supporting the use of Nordic languages, which means Norwegian or Danish may also be used.

The language used in printed material for ceremonies is governed by the rules laid down by the academy stewards in consultation with the vice-chancellor.

Job adverts and recruitment

Job adverts must be published either in Swedish or in both Swedish and English.

The academic titles used in job adverts in English should be either:

- only the title that appears in the list of titles of the Division of Human Resources (see the language pages of the staff web);
- the title from Division of Human Resources list (first) followed by the alternative title.

Example: Either only *senior lecturer* or *senior lecturer/associate professor*.

Language skills of staff

Staff with managerial responsibilities

All staff with managerial responsibilities must have a sufficient level of proficiency in both Swedish and English to enable clear communication within, between and outside SLU.

For example, a manager must be able to communicate with other authorities, occupational health services, the media and the general public in Swedish.

Proficiency in both languages fosters an understanding of the laws and regulations applicable in the workplace and in Sweden. Managers with sufficient language skills help create a supportive and inclusive working environment for all staff.

When recruiting and appointing managers, the responsible manager must ensure that the applicant has sufficient linguistic skills. Those who do not have a sufficient command of Swedish or English should be offered language training, which they must successfully complete before taking up the position.

International staff

Non-Swedish-speaking employees (excluding doctoral students and postdocs) must, within four years of being employed, have acquired sufficient knowledge of Swedish/Scandinavian to understand written and oral information. A basic knowledge of Swedish enables employees to participate fully in all aspects of work within their department and facilitates their participation in wider society.

Incoming staff should therefore be offered the opportunity to develop their Swedish language skills through the courses provided by the Division of Human Resources, where necessary.

Examination languages

Rules on the language used for examinations can be found in the Education Planning and Administration Handbook, Chapter 8.

Using other Nordic languages

Sweden is a signatory to the Nordic Language Convention. This means that, where possible, students should be permitted to answer in Norwegian or Danish, even if the examination language is Swedish. However, this does not apply if the examination relates to terminology, for example, and knowledge of Swedish is to be assessed.

The examiner decides whether it is appropriate and feasible to allow students to use Norwegian and Danish.

Specialised language and terminology

Public authorities in Sweden have a special responsibility to use, develop and make available Swedish terminology in their areas of expertise.⁵ This is particularly true of universities.

Access to Swedish terminology facilitates communication and interaction with the surrounding community. Teachers and researchers with Swedish as their first language are therefore expected to be able to use Swedish as a scientific language and contribute to its development and use in their field.

⁵ Language Act (2009:600).

SLU teachers carry a responsibility to help their students develop basic terminological awareness. Such knowledge is an important support when students, in their future professional role, will communicate their knowledge and contribute to the development of Swedish terminology. The language pages of the staff web provide supporting material.

The language function sometimes receives questions from EU bodies and other organisations about Swedish terms in SLU's various subject areas. Teachers and researchers are called upon to assist the language function, as far as possible, in answering such questions.