



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

**DUTCH AND/OR ENGLISH?
LANGUAGE POLICY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE
NETHERLANDS**

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Higher education

Research
universities

Universities of
applied sciences



LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION – RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

	% ENG *	% NL **	% NL and ENG
Bachelor	20%	70%	10%
Master	69%	18%	13%

Source: report KNAW, annex 4 (data 2015/16)

* ENG=English as language of instruction

** NL=Dutch as language of instruction



	% ENG *	% NL **	% NL and ENG
Economics	88%	6%	6%
Behaviour and society	65%	19%	16%
Health	61%	35%	4%
Agriculture	100%	0%	0%
Nature	80%	4%	16%
Education	1%	99%	0%
Law	38%	56%	6%
Interdisciplinary	100%	0%	0%
Language and culture	53%	20%	27%
Technology	99%	1%	0%

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LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION – UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

	% ENG *	% NL **	% NL and ENG
Bachelor	8%	86%	6%
Master	25%	70%	5%

Source: report KNAW, annex 4 (data 2015/16)

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REQUEST FOR ADVICE

- 'Foresight study'
- Choice of language of instruction + supportive language policy
- Research universities + universities of applied sciences
- Focus on English and/or Dutch



KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE
AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

NEDERLANDS EN/OF ENGELS? TAAALKEUZE MET BELEID IN HET NEDERLANDS HOGER ONDERWIJS





CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: ARGUMENTS



CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: ARGUMENTS

1. Nature and subject matter of the programme



CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: ARGUMENTS

1. Nature and subject matter of the programme
2. Labour market and profession



CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: ARGUMENTS

1. Nature and subject matter of the programme
2. Labour market and profession
3. Internationalisation and quality of education



CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: ARGUMENTS

1. Nature and subject matter of the programme
2. Labour market and profession
3. Internationalisation and quality of education
4. Business-related considerations



CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: ARGUMENTS

1. Nature and subject matter of the programme
2. Labour market and profession
3. Internationalisation and quality of education
4. Business-related considerations



CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: REQUIREMENTS

- **Need for a conscious choice**
- **Need for differentiation**
 - Based on nature and objectives of each study programme
 - Taking into account intermediate and mixed scenarios, e.g.:
 - First year Dutch-language, second year mixed, third year English-language
 - Intensive and dedicated courses in English
 - Minors and electives in English, otherwise Dutch-language programme



SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE POLICY

- **Improving language skills of staff**
- **Improving language skills of students**



SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE POLICY

- **Improving language skills of staff**
 - Proficiency is not enough
 - Intensive coaching and training in English as a medium of instruction
- **Improving language skills of students**



SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE POLICY

- Improving language skills of staff
- **Improving language skills of students**
 - Students learn differently in a foreign language!
 - Dedicated language training, according to need and objectives
 - Differentiation in developing language skills



INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOM

- Value of internationalisation: sharing knowledge and experiences from different backgrounds
- Presence of international students is not enough!
- Intercultural skills must be trained – learning to deal with diversity



MAIN FINDINGS

- **Choice of language of instruction**
 - Should be made consciously
 - Based on nature and objectives of each study programme
- **Language policy**
 - High level, individualised
 - Differentiated according to need and nature/objectives of the programme
 - Should also pay attention to intercultural skills
- **... and more**



IMPORTANCE OF PROFICIENCY IN DUTCH

- Most students enter the Dutch labour market
- Speaking Dutch contributes to stayrate of international students
- No one-size-fits-all policy



LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION

- Dilemma:
 - Exclusion of Dutch-speaking (support and administrative) staff **OR**
 - Exclusion of international students and staff?
- Aim: effective participation for all
- Solution: parallel use of language



IMPACT ON CULTURE AND SOCIETY

- Disadvantage for students from a disadvantaged background or non-Dutch origin
- Wedge between academia and society
- Further study needed



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