

Language Policy Faculty of Religion and Theology

December 2021

Language of instruction at the Faculty of Religion and Theology

- The faculty uses both Dutch and English as its working languages (hybrid), so that all students and staff can participate optimally in education, research, administration and otherwise. As a general rule, whenever a non-Dutch speaker is present, English is spoken.
- Where relevant, documents are written in English or in both English and Dutch. If only a Dutch-speaking target group is envisaged, Dutch is sufficient.

Language policy in education in general

FRT's language policy is in line with the VU Language Policy, the objectives of which are to create an (educational) climate in which all students feel at home and to make sure that the language policy promotes that climate. Such an inclusive culture is based on the following language policy:

- The final attainment levels of all study programmes will specify which Dutch or English communicative skills students need to attain.
- The range of language courses (English and Dutch) offered is presented on the VU website in a conveniently arranged and easy-to-find place.
- Teachers must have a demonstrably sufficient command of English as a language of instruction (C1 level). If this is insufficient, they must improve their skills within a period of time agreed with the head of department. This can be done by following VU-wide courses. Teachers are given the opportunity to follow an English-language course (VU). The responsibility to offer these courses and for testing and refresher courses lies with the faculty.
- A non-Dutch-speaking lecturer should follow a course in basic Dutch as soon as possible after appointment. This can be done by following VU-wide courses within a time frame agreed with the Head of Department.
- "Language policy" and teacher professionalisation are part of the Quality resources for which FRT has also earmarked funds via the Study Advance Fund.
- Students and teachers train themselves in the concept of the international mixed classroom.

Language policy in the bachelor programmes

- For English-language bachelor's programmes, an English language test has been developed, as well as a remedial course in English language skills.
- Remedial education after the Dutch and/or English language test is a compulsory part of the curriculum of the bachelor's programmes.
- Dutch-speaking students in the English-language bachelor's programmes are given the opportunity to develop their Dutch language skills (within or outside the curriculum).
- Attention is paid to English language skills in Dutch-language bachelor's programmes, so students are well prepared for an English-language master's programme (if applicable) and/or the international labour market (if applicable).

Language policy in the bachelor's programme Theology and Religious Studies

The new bachelor's programme Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) started in September 2020. In the following tracks it is possible to complete the full programme in English: General Religious Studies, Buddhism, Hinduism, Baptist Seminary, Mennonite Seminary, Evangelical Reformed, Classical Theological and Free choice. The tracks Islam and Hersteld Hervormd Seminarie are in English and Dutch.

Within this programme the following guidelines apply for the language policy:

- The core courses are taught in English.
- The majority of the shared courses and minor courses are also taught in English.
- Students who follow the English-language tracks will take all examinations in English. Students in the bilingual tracks may choose to do so in Dutch or English, provided that the teacher has sufficient command of the Dutch language¹. The tests themselves will be in English.
- Exceptions to the above may only be made in individual cases after written permission from the Examination Board.
- In English-language courses, presentations must be prepared and held in English.
- Students of the bilingual track Hersteld Hervormd Seminarie who wish to follow the language acquisition courses Hebrew and Greek in Dutch, may join these courses which are offered in Dutch in the Joint Degree bachelor Theology
- In 2021-22 the Arabic modules will only be offered in English. In time, these will be offered in Dutch. These courses are part of the Islam track that is offered in Dutch for the time being.

The language of the new courses is determined in the following manner:

- The module coordinator makes a substantiated proposal to the Programme Director for the language in which the course will be taught. Core courses and courses from the English-language tracks will always be in English.
- The Programme Director, together with the Dean for Education, monitors whether the minimum requirement of 180 EC in a continuous learning trajectory is still guaranteed.
- The Dean for Education gives permission on behalf of the FB, after the Programme Committee has been consulted for advice.

Language policy in the Master's programmes

FRT has three different types of master's programmes. Programmes (or programme tracks) that are taught entirely in English, programmes (or programme tracks) that offer subjects in Dutch and in English and programmes that are entirely Dutch-language.

Programmes in English

The following programmes are taught in English:

- **Master Theology & Religious Studies** (60 EC) tracks:
 - Interreligious Studies (until 2021 Building Interreligious Relations)

¹ Students who started the programme before 2020 are strongly encouraged to submit written works in English, but are allowed to submit tests in both Dutch and English as a transitional measure if the teacher has sufficient command of the Dutch language.

- Exploring a Discipline
- Media (phased out by 2021-2022)
- Peace, Trauma and Religion
- **Master of Theology and Religious Studies** (research, 120 EC)

The entry requirements for these programmes are stipulated in the OER (Art. 7.2). For these programmes, students have to take all tests (presentations, papers, exams, thesis, etc.) in English.

English and Dutch-language programmes

The following programme is taught in both Dutch and English:

- **Master Theology & Religious Studies** (60 EC) track:
 - Spiritual Care

The entry requirements for this programme are laid down in the OER (art. 7.2). Parts of this programme are taught in English. For these components, the following guidelines apply:

- Tests of courses taught in English are set in English. If the lecturer has sufficient command of the Dutch language, papers and examinations may be completed in Dutch. Students should discuss this individually with the lecturer concerned.
- In courses taught in English, presentations must be prepared and held in English.
- The thesis may be written in Dutch.

Dutch-language programmes

The following programme is taught in Dutch:

- **Master Theology & Religious Studies** (Preacher's programme, 180 EC)

It is possible that some courses in this programme are taught in English. The following guidelines apply:

- Tests of courses taught in English are set in English. If the lecturer has sufficient command of the Dutch language, papers and exams may be handed in in Dutch. Students should discuss this individually with the lecturer concerned.
- In courses taught in English, presentations must be prepared and held in English.
- The thesis must be written in Dutch.