



# Language policies

for local and global  
communication

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**Since its foundation in 1222, the University of Padua has been a scientific, cultural, and social sanctuary, and currently ranks itself among the best universities in the world for its research and for its environmental and social sustainability policies.**

**The University understands that language is an affirmation of conceived reality.**

**Language is a vehicle for which for both conceptual and scientific values are conveyed, made evident by documents, treaties, and international agreements.**

**For this reason, the University has decided to outline its position relative to the use and choice of language within the University. In doing so, we are able to highlight our scientific importance and the role that we play at local, regional, national, and on global levels. We are committed to adhering to the documents proposed by all international bodies such as the United Nations, UNESCO, the European Community, and the World Health Organization. The University is committed to its accountability for a democratic, fair, non-discriminatory, and an inclusive vision that is capable of promoting exchanges and relations at various levels, including that of intercultural communication.**

# General objective

The University of Padua's main objective of this outline is to ensure that the linguistic context encourages the development of a democratic, international and multilingual academic community, that is based on equity, inclusion, and sustainability as well as to promote effective and positive communication and cooperation at all levels of education, research, and third mission. Our goal is to make the University a model and a reference point under the contexts for which it operates.

Therefore, it is not merely enough that we increase awareness of the importance of language skills and the socio-cultural value of language, but also to improve the language skills within all areas of academic life.

In order to achieve our objectives, this document provides a clear guideline on the correct use of Italian, English, and other languages, all in a non-discriminatory and inclusive way. We also provide an outline of measures that guarantees effective intercultural communication.

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## Italian as a complete, equal and inclusive language

Linguistically, English is the undisputed dominant vehicle of global communication. Having said that, Italian must maintain and strengthen its cultural and social role and remain the protagonist in all areas of its country's life.

A linguistic policy that enhances Italian, in the context of global multilingualism, can be invested under three fundamental actions. First, by teaching the national language to those arriving in Italy as a demonstration as a channel to citizenship. Second, by strengthening ties within local Italian communities and Italians living abroad. And third, through the global spread of Italian as a cultural tool.

However, we must remember that successful language policies begin with the liveliness and the ability to renew itself and that the protection and 'care' of the Italian language depends on its daily use.

As an institution, it is important for the University to maintain its place in the production of knowledge. If it is true that English is the undisputed global language, then Italian must also be included in cultural and scientific production.

In fact, it is not possible to play an international role, nor a local one, if it is not able to advocate for it in all areas of knowledge, culture, economy, and politics.

One must possess the right words in order to share knowledge and discoveries with the relevant public. Words allow scholars and scientists to influence the national public debate without obstructing their connection with the international scientific community.

Therefore, it is beneficial to recognize the importance of the Italian language in all aspects of the University and academic life, not only in the context of its power to communicate and share knowledge but also to spread values and produce social cohesion.

It is for this reason that the University supports and promotes an equal and inclusive use of the Italian language.

## Gender-neutral language

The University of Padua promotes the use of language that is attentive to gender diversity. Including in this is the language used for institutional communication, administrative procedures as well as documents for public events and daily academic life. Language must convey the values of equity, openness, and inclusion that inspire the University's Statute.

As an institution and as a place for producing and the sharing knowledge, the University takes responsibility in transmitting the importance of educating differences by supporting the ethics of equal opportunity and gender equality, in study, research, and career access.

The outline for the conscious use of gender in the Italian language starts with a series of considerations:

- - Language is never a neutral instrument. Language gives shape and a voice to the way humans think, it interprets reality and the action of the world. It is one of the areas in which stereotypes and gender prejudices are produced and perpetuated. At the same time, language can be a powerful tool to unhinge ancient customs, support change, and, in the specific case, promote a more equitable and less asymmetrical culture. Language recognizes and values the equal presence and roles of both women and men throughout all areas of knowledge, academic life, and in society.
- Language and the way in which we speak are always in motion, they are flexible and change over time. They follow the transformations of a progressive society and can, as a result, influence and accelerate them. Using a language that is respectful of gender diversity is a response to the need for social change and the affirmation of gender equality to find recognition in support of the words used.

Therefore, gender equality acts to represent oneself in all the ways in which language allows it to or, if necessary, in making the language welcoming and renewable. When the language “speaks” of these changes it reflects upon new roles and new positions by giving visibility to the construction of a world that is expected to be increasingly “equal.” The guidelines drawn up by the University's equality bodies can be found in the booklet entitled *Generi e linguaggi: linee guida per un linguaggio amministrativo e istituzionale attento alle differenze di genere* (*Gender and language: a guideline for an administrative and institutional language attentive to gender diversity*) and are to be used as an invitation on how to use language strategically while supporting equality of all genders and in social justice.

## Inclusive language

There are numerous amounts of data found in literature that emphasize the role of words in conveying prejudices and stereotypes, intensifying real constitutional barriers towards inclusion, and as a result, words promote various forms of discrimination, stigmatization, and social distances. Highly stigmatizing expressions are words that reflect a person to coincide with the attributes that characterize them, be they the presence of disabilities, mental health issues, migration status, etc. Words such as ‘disabled’, ‘handicapped’, ‘immigrant’, cause a substantial loss of individual specificity and uniqueness. We understand that languages both dated and outdated use explanatory models to imply, in principle, that difficulties are merely an individual expression. Terms such as ‘handicapped’, ‘suffer from’, ‘is affected by’, ‘confined to’, must be avoided and are scientifically incorrect. Terms such as ‘able-bodied’ or ‘differently-abled’, as is in any group, regardless of the depth or dimension of the described attribute, manifests itself as an inter-individual variability.

### The inclusive conceptual models set forth by the University of Padua invites us to emphasize the person.

In events that deem it necessary to express a specific attribute, that otherwise cannot be disregarded, the expression “person with” must be followed by the attribute during interpersonal relations, on administrative documents, drafted texts, as well as on the website platform, and whenever the situation deems it necessary. Some expressions are given as examples: a person with disabilities, a person with visual impairment, a person with hearing loss, a student with learning disabilities, an employee with a disability, a person with history of migration, a person with (name of specific condition or impairment), etc. Thus, we wish to “underline the value given to the individual along with the attribute that characterizes them, e.g. the disability includes only part of one’s life” (Rizzuto, 2018).

Please see the following link for more information  
<https://www.unipd.it/en/inclusion>

## Language for teaching

This document promotes the principles of the Bologna Process in terms of mobility, overall employability of graduates, and lifelong learning. Italian is the main language of the University of Padua and therefore essential for its teaching and research activities. All students are given the right to have a high-quality university education offered in the Italian language.

However, to ensure that the University plays a strategic role in the international academic community, English, as a *bridge language*, and to a certain extent other languages, are fundamental for making the services and skills of the University available to scholars, students, and staff at various levels.

Therefore, multilingualism, multiculturalism, and high linguistic quality are essential for both national and international activities, interactions, and exchanges.

Consequently, it seems appropriate to provide guidelines on the linguistic quality of the courses and lessons taught in English (and other subsequent languages) while simultaneously establishing, monitoring and supporting the achievements and maintenance of the required knowledge of the academic language by students and staff, both in English and Italian. To this end, a wide range of English and Italian courses are offered to guarantee that the appropriate language skills for their respective academic activities are available to all.

The University promotes the academic communication skills both in Italian and English for staff involved in activities that provide English as a medium of instruction (EMI). It also promotes projects on the requirements for creating international classes and the internationalization of the curriculum.

## Languages for research

Academic research is open: scholars must be guaranteed the choice of which language they are to use for their research. The University of Padua recognizes the importance of presenting research results in Italian, both locally and nationally, to preserve and develop sector-specific terminology in the Italian language. However, the academic community is international, and the use of English is often mandatory to access academic forums, to present research results, to publish in the reference journals, and to write proposals and projects, both individually and in collaboration, both within Europe and on an international level.

Therefore, the University supports its researchers in achieving the language skills necessary to participate fully in international research.

Research information related to job vacancies, admission procedures, facilities, and equipment, etc. must also be communicated in English (and in other languages when relevant) and that respects an inclusive language attentive to gender diversity. This is to ensure that the University continues to attract international researchers and lecturers, as well as to encourage applications from potential PhD students, fellows, postdoctoral fellows, and to support and improve the work of visiting scholars.

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## Languages for service and administration

Although Italian is the main language used by the administration,

the University of Padua aims to make all necessary communications and documentation available in English. This includes legal decrees, instructions, safety procedures, regulations, and forms, this is especially relevant for internationalization, inclusion, and recruitment processes, as well as for international students, visiting scientists, academic, technical, administrative staff, and international stakeholders.

Furthermore, the University recognizes the importance of English in terms of the quality of linguistic competence it holds, and as an essential skill within the growing international community of the University of Padua. From an administrative point of view, the linguistic quality and its comprehensibility to a large audience are both essential in providing high quality services and guaranteeing effective communication. The University intends to work toward this by providing specialized linguistic preparation for the academic, technical and administrative staff, in addition to offering Italian courses for free.

## Language for external communication

In many aspects, both Italian and English are used to provide information on the multi-lingual and multicultural context of the University, such as the structure, the organization, the teaching staff, the staff dedicated to research, the students and the technical-administrative staff.

Italian is the main language used for communicating academic events and activities held nationally, while English should be used when appropriate or necessary. This is particularly relevant for the websites of each school, department, and centre, where information is addressed to an international audience.

All documents related to multilingual and multicultural environments, such as partnership agreements and programs, updated news on important events, relevant projects and achievements, must be made available both in Italian and in English.

The University promotes intercultural communication in its sphere to facilitate the inclusion and learning of languages. This also creates a beneficial effect on the learning content of English, in cases where it is used as a medium of instruction (EMI).

# Implementation and future prospects

This document is a fluid proposal, which will be adapted along new and different situations as they arise and evolve.

It is the basis for planning and implementing new courses and activities, starting new projects, hiring staff, developing university communication, as well as a reference for the choices related to language within the University.

A working group, appointed by the Rector, will develop this document further with applicable details.

The Academic Senate of the University will monitor and update the content of language policies when and where necessary, while keeping abreast of inevitable changes and future developments.



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