

Motion In Support of a Formal Institutionalised Language Policy (ILP) and Collegiate Contribution for Insessional Academic English Courses for Non-native Speakers

Proposer: Alessandro Ceccarelli, President

Second: Stella Swain, Welfare and Rights Officer

The Graduate Union notes:

1. University of Cambridge is a member of the League of European Research Universities (LERU). Not only are we one of the few Universities in the League without a formal language policy, but we just do not feature at all within the new report (LERU, Bernd Kortmann, Briefing Paper No. 4 - November 2019). 13 out of 18 responding LERU universities implement some sort of official institutionalised language policy (ILP), most of them dating from the 2010s;
2. Institutionalised Language Policy (ILP) documents specify the linguistic competence that students, lecturers and other staff need to attain in order to study or work at a given university – including a list of the specific language tests that are necessary and recognised by that institution. These documents also outline possible ways in which existing language deficits in prospective candidates might be addressed. Such strategies for language development address not only the acquisition and improvement of the national (or: host) language(s) but also skills in additional languages (for a review of language policies, see Gutierrez Eugenio, Ester and Nick Saville (2017). Policy review: The role of assessment in European language policy: a historical overview. Languages, Society & Policy. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.9801>);
3. A survey by the European University Association (EUA) demonstrates that practically all European universities follow a strategy of internationalisation which primarily aims at promoting mobility across target groups (see Colucci E. et al. 2014. Connecting mobility policies and practice: Observations and recommendations on national and institutional developments in Europe);
4. Successful internationalisation and mobility depend upon coherent official language policies. Such policies should also define to what extent measures to internationalise universities need to be applied within the universities' administration, too;
5. In UK Universities, there have been repeated calls for a consolidated effort to promote foreign language learning. The London School of Economics, for example, highlights the importance of education, in general, and the promotion of foreign language learning for local and international students, in particular, specifically as a means for professional development. This recent movement in favour of foreign language learning is supported by the British Council (see British Council. 2017. Languages for the future https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/languages_for_the_future_2017.pdf);
6. International students (all Schools/Faculties/Departments) who have met the University's 'Language Condition' of entry to graduate programmes may (and often do) still need additional support in developing their English medium academic

writing and presentation skills. Proof of English language proficiency is not sufficient to ensure that students can follow English-medium academic conventions, structure arguments appropriately (this is often a cross-cultural phenomenon) and may still also have some aspects of their English usage which requires attention (see Cambridge Graduate Admissions, Competence in English);

7. Those students who are set the In-Sessional as a condition of entry by the GAO (Graduate Admissions Office), having marginally failed to meet the language condition for entry, are required to confirm their ability to pay for it (i.e. £385 per student in 2017/18) when meeting the financial conditions of entry. However, for all other students who might be referred to the Language Centre or elect to seek this additional (sometimes crucial) support, this may not be the case (£280/student in 2017/18). In 2019 the figures went up to:
 - a. Full Conditional: £790
 - b. Half Conditional: £420
 - c. Elective (i.e. not conditional): £300

For more info, see the Cambridge Academic Development and Training for International Students (ADTIS);

8. International students who are non-native English speakers are expected to cover the expenses for (a) a very expensive pre-sessional English Course; and (b) an expensive in-sessional academic English course. Other Universities in the UK (e.g. University of Manchester; SOAS; etc.) do cover the cost of in-sessional support courses;
9. In a national survey by BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes), over 90% of HEIs who responded provide In-Sessional support free at the point of delivery to international, including non-UK EU, students who require it (also see Brewer S. et al., 2019. Papers on In-sessional English for Academic Purposes, LSE).

The Graduate Union believes:

1. That the promotion of foreign language learning for local and international students is crucial as a means for professional and personal development;
2. From a higher education perspective, the development of Institutionalised language policy (ILP) documents almost always goes hand in hand with the process of making universities more international;
3. That in-sessional English courses and 'student support' provision should be included in student fees (without further increasing fees for international students).

The Graduate Union resolves:

1. To urge the University of Cambridge General Board and its Education Committee to formalise an Institutionalised Language Policy (ILP);
2. To urge Heads of Schools and Heads of Houses, as well as the Cambridge Admission Office, to set up a mechanism to cover the expenses of in-sessional courses for students who may need this. In practical terms, this would potentially require a topslice of international fee income allocated to the Language Centre before distribution to Schools, thus reducing the allocations to Schools (without further increasing fees for international students). The Language Centre would estimate, based on calculations in other universities, that £45-£50 sliced off all international student fees would be sufficient, but this could be reviewed according to take-up/demand and actual costs incurred by the Language Centre to staff the delivery.

Following their enquiry, the Cambridge Language Centre estimates, based on models elsewhere, that £45-£50 sliced off all international student fees would be sufficient but that this could be reviewed according to take-up/demand and actual costs incurred for delivery.