



L-Università  
ta' Malta

# Comprehensive Guidelines for the Use of Language at the University of Malta

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# 1. Prologue

1.1 In 2019, the University of Malta (UM) celebrated its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a ‘University of General Studies’ in Malta. For a substantial period during this time, and as a Jesuit College before that, the main language of instruction at UM was Latin, then replaced by Italian and then replaced by English. UM had been in existence for centuries when Malta became an independent and sovereign state in 1964. Thus, UM has had an international character and disposition throughout its long history, while it has more recently developed its role as a champion and promoter of local culture and language.

## 2. UM Strategic Plan

2.1 The *UM Strategic Plan 2020-25* [[EN](#); [MT](#)] refers to UM’s mission from both national and international perspectives. The strategic commitments emanating from this Strategic Plan for 2019-2020 – its first year of implementation – include a commitment to both “develop a language policy” and “[m]aintain a dynamic language policy for the University”. The Plan, endorsed at and by UM after an extensive series of consultations, commends and advocates the primacy of English as the language of instruction, while acknowledging the need to support Maltese, the national language.

2.2 This document comprises comprehensive guidelines on the use of language at the University of Malta. It has been proposed for discussion and adopted by the University Senate in June 2021, in light of the common understanding of the timeliness to reflect on the contemporary status of language on the UM campus.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The assistance of the following in crafting this document, and in developing and analysing its accompanying survey, is acknowledged with thanks: Mario Aquilina (Department of English); Ray Fabri (Institute of Linguistics & Language Technology); Albert Gatt (Institute of Linguistics & Language Technology); Gillian Martin (Department of Sociology); Sergio Portelli (Department of Translation, Terminology & Interpreting Studies); Michael Spagnol (Department of Maltese); Lonneke van der Plas (Institute of Linguistics & Language Technology); and Odette Vassallo (Centre for English Language Proficiency).

### 3. Principles and Goals

3.1 A Language Policy – drafted, circulated and implemented – is a critical step forward in the establishment of healthy language practice at the University of Malta.

3.2 First, the underlying principles and goals of such a Language Policy are provided. Such principles are needed to ground the policy, whilst stating goals is useful to provide a clear sense of direction. Making explicit the underlying principles and goals, many of which are implicit in the document, also serves the important function of grounding the list of recommendations that are clearly set out in this document.

3.3 The underlying **principles** for the University of Malta’s Language Policy include that:

- (a) as a reflection of lived experiences in contemporary Malta, the University of Malta gives due recognition to the country’s three official languages: *il-Malti*, English and *il-Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija*.
- (b) as one of Malta’s largest employers, the University of Malta is to lead by example by ensuring a spirit of mutual respect and inclusivity, without any of its actors, suppliers, visitors, clients or employees feeling left out, marginalised or somehow discriminated against because of their mother tongue or preferred language.
- (c) as the leading public higher education institution in Malta, the University of Malta has a vital role in nurturing linguistic excellence and promoting multilingualism, multiculturalism and intercultural communication, on its campus and beyond; thus, supporting all members of its academic community to function effectively in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural society.
- (d) as a quality educational establishment, positioned in a regional and global context, the University of Malta has a duty towards providing every opportunity to all members of its community to continue enhancing their language skills and repertoires throughout their working lives.

3.4 These principles are translated into **goals** for the Language Policy, such as to:

- (a) put in place concrete measures which will serve to ensure due recognition of the official languages of Malta: *il-Malti*, English and *il-Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija* (Maltese Sign Language: LSM).
- (b) provide a solid framework for the sustainable provision of services which will allow all members of the University of Malta community to function effectively and appropriately in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural society.

- (c) ensure support to all members of the University of Malta community who need or wish to continue improving their language skills and linguistic repertoires throughout their lifetime.
- (d) delineate and secure a budget for the infrastructural needs and resources required for the established goals to be met.

## 4. Rationale: For a UM Language Policy

4.1 When an individual speaks and understands *only one* language, then the world is engaged and mediated exclusively through that medium. However, when an individual speaks and understands *two* or more languages, then they possess the versatility to choose which language to use when they speak, write or read, and possibly also when spoken to.

4.2 UM is an environment where most actors speak more than one language. The most common languages in use at UM are:

- (a) – English (EN) – the language of instruction and assessment in some 95% of study-units/ programmes of study. It is the native language/ second language/ language of competence of various members of the (non-Maltese) campus community, including some 100 full-time academic staff; 1,100 international students; 400 visiting students annually; and a proportion of Maltese students, including those with at least one foreign-born parent/guardian. Insofar as UM is a research and teaching institution, members of its faculty and student body actively teach and/or research in areas of regional and international importance or relevance, for global, regional and/or domestic publics and with the intent to disseminate and publish abroad. In all such instances, the preferred written and spoken medium is English. Thus, in its academic role, UM has (to date) functioned successfully, if not as a monolingual institution, then as an institution that has emphasised the use of English as the medium of instruction, assessment and – also for practical reasons affecting academia anywhere in the world – as the medium of publication for the lion’s share of its research output.
- (b) – Maltese (MT) – the native language of some 85% of all students; around 90% of all staff; and around 95% of campus visitors. Given the University’s national role, as the sole tertiary education institution of its size, stature and status, and as the pre-eminent public institution in the tertiary education sector in Malta, its mission and responsibility to speak to domestic and national needs is unequivocal. Proficiency in medical MT is mandatory at UM’s Medical School;<sup>2</sup> and proficiency in EN and MT is required for students following programmes in BA (Hons.) Early Childhood

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<sup>2</sup> However, Medical Maltese *alone* is increasingly not sufficient to prepare nurses, dentists or medical students, since a significant number of patients they will face in Malta may be non-Maltese speakers.

Education & Care (ECEC) as well as the Masters in Teaching & Learning (MTL). Teaching programmes and research efforts at UM are also often motivated by needs and developments at the national level. Recent examples include the setting up of a Centre for Distributed Ledger Technologies; the opening of a Postgraduate Diploma in Maltese Sign Language Interpreting; and the slate of study-units made available through the Centre for Liberal Arts and Sciences. In some such situations, the language of instruction and communication is Maltese.

Maltese speakers may also be bidialectal: in Standard Maltese and one of its dialects to different degrees (Vella, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

The overlap between EN and MT users is huge but not comprehensive: most international students do not know MT and some Maltese students feel uncomfortable talking, or being talked to, in EN. Nevertheless, bilingualism (EN/MT) is the key to success in most professional roles in Malta today

- (c) - Maltese Sign Language (MSL) - Knowledge of sign language would also add value to any professional working within specific social environments, also in Malta. This is especially the case since the designation, in 2016, of Maltese Sign Language as an official language of Malta. Here, the University of Malta should lead by example. Especially in high-profile public events and other activities for which the media are present, availability of MSL interpretation should be considered as 'best practice'.
- (d) - Other Languages - Additionally, other languages are also in use among UM actors. Up until Year 11, students in Maltese schools are exposed to a third language. There is, for example, a sizable community of Italian nationals and Italian language speakers on campus. Students and staff from distinct 'third language' groups (e.g. Arabic speakers; Mandarin speakers) can and do get together for social and/or academic pursuits. Most of these events may not be official UM events. There are also various language departments at UM: most lie within the Faculty of Arts, where at least four other languages (apart from EN and MT) – French, German, Italian and Spanish – are taught, used and practised. There is also a Department of Languages & Humanities Education within the Faculty of Education.

4.3 Thus, in its national role, UM also functions in, and serves a society which – at law – is recognised to be plurilingual: MT, EN and MSL are the official languages of Malta. Moreover, Maltese society is, in practice, highly multilingual: a majority of residents are comfortable navigating in MT, EN or both; and a growing number of residents are speakers of other languages, as a result of increasing demographic diversity. At UM, with certain well-defined exceptions, the language of *instruction* and *assessment* is EN. However, depending on specific situations, the chosen language(s) of *communication* – whether

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<sup>3</sup> Vella, A. (2013): Languages and language varieties in Malta. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(5), 532-552.

written, spoken or signed – may vary as a function of the prominence of specific linguistic preferences – primarily of the student, and secondarily of the lecturer – so evident in 21st century Malta.

4.4 Given this situation and predicament, it becomes important to acknowledge and articulate what is being proposed as ‘best practice’ in language use at UM. This includes guidelines about how to approach distinct scenarios that are part of campus life and which may call for different strategies in language use.

4.5 Such guidelines need to factor in UM’s commitment to: (1) internationalisation, and therefore, its commitment to the usage of EN as the default language of instruction; (2) national development: UM has a vital role to play as a bulwark and custodian of Maltese culture, language and scholarship; and (3) support for ‘third languages’, encouraging trilingual competence amongst Maltese publics.

4.6 UM’s language policy must reflect these diverse aspirations. It would need to signal clearly when it is appropriate to use EN, when MT, when a combination or a sequence of the two, when a 3<sup>rd</sup> language, or when choices can be left at the discretion of the user.

4.7 A language policy would also inculcate awareness among the various groups and actors who spend time at UM to its diverse linguistic landscape and how best to tap its richness, while avoiding frustration and alienation.

## 5. Context and Challenges

5.1 It must be admitted that Malta’s linguistic scenario is “very complex”<sup>4</sup>, and becoming more so with the influx of many foreign residents. Maltese was declared an official language, together with English, in 1934. After independence in 1964, Maltese was defined as the national language, English then assuming a constitutionally subsidiary role as an official language, together with Maltese. In 2004, Malta acceded to the European Union, and Maltese became an official language of the EU.

5.2 Maltese (*il-Malti*) remains the dominant spoken language in Malta. Both the 2011 census<sup>5</sup> and a 2012 Eurobarometer survey<sup>6</sup> reported that MT was then the unequivocal mother tongue of some 95-98% of the resident population, with a small percentage of

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education & Employment (2015). *Language education policy profile: Malta*. Valletta, Malta: MEDE & Council of Europe, p. 13. Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/language-education-policy-profilemalta/16807b3c392>; Sciriha, L., & Vassallo, M. (2001). *Malta: A linguistic landscape*. Msida, Malta: Malta University Press.

<sup>5</sup> National Statistics Office (2011). *Malta census of population and housing*. Retrieved from: [https://nso.gov.mt/en/publications/Publications\\_by\\_Unit/Documents/01\\_Methodology\\_and\\_Research/Census2011\\_FinalReport.pdf](https://nso.gov.mt/en/publications/Publications_by_Unit/Documents/01_Methodology_and_Research/Census2011_FinalReport.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Eurobarometer Survey 2012*. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip\\_12\\_679/IP\\_12\\_679\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_12_679/IP_12_679_EN.pdf)

Maltese nationals also claiming English as their mother tongue.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, despite its small user-base and reach, Maltese also has a number of dialects – such as *Xlukkajr* (Incorvaja, 2007) or *Naduri* (Said, 2007) – which have survived the effects of globalisation and modernisation.<sup>8</sup> In the private domain, meanwhile, interaction in most families took place overwhelmingly in MT (93.2% with mother/female guardian; 93.1% with father/male guardian), according to a study published in 2006<sup>9</sup>. Data also suggests that the incidence of EN language use is consistently highest amongst the managerial and professional classes; in contrast, a much lower percentage of EN use has been registered among manual workers, homemakers and the unemployed.

5.3 The situation is starkly different when dealing with the written medium. A 2011 survey by the NSO suggests that writing in EN is preferred by 44.5% of the population, while 43.1% prefer writing in MT. When asked about a preferred language when reading, 46.3% of respondents chose EN, while 38.6% opted for MT<sup>10</sup>. A 2013 study suggests that the readership of EN-language newspapers – *The Times of Malta* and *The Sunday Times of Malta* in particular – is higher than that of other papers<sup>11</sup>. News online is mostly available in EN; but some sites routinely publish news bilingually, or in MT only.

5.4 An increasing number of books are being written in MT or translated into MT; but reading material in MT remains limited when compared to the availability of English texts. Most textbooks used in schools are in EN. Textbooks in MT generally deal with the teaching and learning of the Maltese language, religion and social studies. For secondary schools, there are also textbooks in MT, including for such subjects as history and geography.

5.5 Maltese is used on most local TV and radio stations, and the investment in local productions (e.g. soap operas and documentaries) and talk shows means that the proportion of MT usage on such media has increased. However, clients interested in films and season-long cinematic features can opt today for a huge range of options via Cable TV, live streaming and such platforms as Netflix or Disney Media, where EN dominates (albeit non-EN productions are also flourishing, often with the option of EN subtitles). MT is used regularly in most churches for most religious services (including homilies and choir singing). MT is also

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<sup>7</sup> A 'state of the nation' study in June 2021 suggests that 82.1% of Maltese residents consider MT as the principal language while 1.3% declare EN; the remaining 16.7% declare both MT & EN. (Margin of error is +/- 3%.) E.g.: <https://www.one.com.mt/news/2021/06/04/il-maggoranza-tal-maltin-huma-kuntenti-u-87-ma-xtaqux-li-twiieldu-fpajjiz-iehor-studju-ta-marmara/>

<sup>8</sup> Incorvaja, W. (2007). *Ix-Xlukkajr: Is-sistema vokalika u differenzi lessikali*. [Xlukkajr: The vocalic system and lexical differences.] B.A. (Hons.) dissertation. Malta: University of Malta; Said, M. J. (2007). *In-Naduri: Is-sistema vokalika u differenzi lessikali* [Naduri: The vocalic system and lexical differences.] B.A. (Hons.) dissertation. Malta: University of Malta.

<sup>9</sup> Sciriha, L., & Vassallo, M. (2006). *Living languages in Malta*. Malta: IT Printing.

<sup>10</sup> National Statistics Office. (2011). *Culture participation survey*. Retrieved from: [http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document\\_file.aspx?id=3231](http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=3231) Full results of the 2011 National Census are at: [https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications\\_by\\_Unit/Documents/01\\_Methodology\\_and\\_Research/Census\\_2011\\_FinalReport.pdf](https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications_by_Unit/Documents/01_Methodology_and_Research/Census_2011_FinalReport.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Vella, A. (2013). Languages and language varieties in Malta. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(5), 532-552.



the language of the Courts of Law: though here, the situation is rendered more complex because laws are often drafted in EN, then translated into MT. (However, if there is a variance in the meaning between the English and the Maltese versions of a law or legal text, the Maltese version in most cases takes precedence.)

5.6 English usage is prevalent in such spheres as tourism, entertainment, commerce, the mass media and the internet. On social media, EN is mainly used on Twitter; while MT is used somewhat more frequently on Facebook, though it is by no means predominant. Particularly those born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have experienced the technological revolution which has ushered in a digital age. The language behind the internet is EN and mobile technology has facilitated communication within and beyond our shores, where EN also dominates.

5.7 A further challenge here is that the use of MT on such social media platforms often involves non-standard orthography, as is the case with many other languages.

5.8 In primary and secondary schools, teachers and pupils resort to extensive EN-MT code-switching for decades.

5.9 The growing presence of migrant families and their children in recent years in Malta has led to more diversity in students' language backgrounds. The linguistic environment in Malta is "increasingly one involving *plurilingualism*, drawing on all of one's linguistic resources to satisfy social and pedagogical needs".<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of students and staff members with international or migrant backgrounds into Maltese society will be furthered by offering them opportunities to learn and practise both the Maltese and English Language, as well as insights and knowledge about Maltese society, culture and labour market practices. Joint study activities and group work experiences involving students of different nationalities *together* ought to be encouraged.

## 6. Recent Developments in Higher Education

A series of recent developments have impacted on higher education generally, both in Malta and internationally, and have a bearing on language choice and use:

6.1 *The globalisation of higher education, with the greater international currency of English, especially in natural science subjects and research.* Beyond this, a solid mastery in both oral/written forms of EN is a critical 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. Maltese residents could possibly get by in their life in Malta without knowing English; but their lives may be restricted and circumscribed in the process. For Maltese students at UM, their time at the university offers a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in a primarily English-language-driven learning medium and workscape. The students' obligation to think, read, write and argue in

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<sup>12</sup> Camilleri Grima, A. (2016). Editorial: Bilingualism in education in Malta. *Malta Review of Educational Research*, 10(2), 177-179.

EN should hone their English language skills in preparation for the general trials of life and career, in Malta or abroad.

6.2 *Increasing proportions of enrolled university students in Malta are likely to have Maltese as their dominant spoken language.* This is partly so because of the growing number of postgraduate, part-time and evening UM students who hail from beyond the 17-20 age cohort, and thus beyond the more traditional recruiting grounds of the professional middle class where one or both parents may already be a graduate. To such students studying at UM, and especially ‘first generation’ university students, EN may play a less dominant role. They are more likely to frame their arguments and communicate in MT, orally – and perhaps also, though not necessarily – in writing.

6.3 *Notwithstanding (6.1), and the advantage afforded to EN-speakers/writers, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of mastering competence in a ‘third language’ to promote intercultural understanding, facilitate trade and business cooperation, build a trans-national European identity, etc.* According to both the European Union and the Council of Europe, all young European children should be trilingual: learning two languages in addition to the national language(s) of the country in which they reside. In the Maltese context, this means MT and EN plus one other language.<sup>13</sup> Competency in other regional/global languages – such as Spanish, Hindi, Russian, Mandarin Chinese and Arabic – is being encouraged.<sup>14</sup>

6.4 *With EN as its declared language of instruction, UM has a huge competitive advantage.* It is one of only two public universities in the Mediterranean where EN is the language of instruction.<sup>15</sup> Students in Malta are either fee-exempt or liable to relatively affordable fees, making UM a particularly attractive (and safe) destination for international students.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in recent years, some 10% of regular students at UM have been non-Maltese. The proportion of international postgraduate students has also been on the increase.

6.5 Both practical and financial reasons are often cited to explain why specific communicative tools are provided in one language *only*. For example:

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<sup>13</sup> The most common third languages studied in Europe are French and German.

<sup>14</sup> At UM, the MA in Translation Studies offers an extra study-unit to entice students to practise translation from an additional source language; in the case of MT students, this often implies a third language.

<sup>15</sup> The other being the University of Gibraltar, in Gibraltar, set up in 2015.

<sup>16</sup> It has however been noted that UM postgraduate fees may not be competitive enough to attract students from developing countries, such as Africa or Central America.

(a) - The current brand manual details that all UM signage on campus (barring a few exceptions) is to be in English only (also to avoid clutter, improve aesthetics and undertake the task at hand - that of indicating locations – with greater clarity).<sup>17</sup>

(b) - THINK Magazine, an attractive, online and print publication by UM serving outreach purposes, has been available in English only ([www.um.edu.mt/think/](http://www.um.edu.mt/think/)). Issue 33 (November 2020), however, carried a bilingual article on Maltese dialects.<sup>18</sup>

(c) - The UM website [www.um.edu.mt](http://www.um.edu.mt) (including Newspoint, its news platform), is in English only, bar a few exceptions.

(d) - The UM's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages and the MY UM application, are in EN only. The one exception to this trend involves the webpages of the *Dipartiment tal-Malti*, which are in Maltese: [www.um.edu.mt/arts/malti](http://www.um.edu.mt/arts/malti).

6.6 Nevertheless, it is clear that most members of the UM academic and administrative staff, as well as its students, prefer a multilingual environment, in particular with respect to the presence and visibility of Maltese and English on campus. If well planned, an investment in multilingualism is an asset and not a financial burden. Moreover, the main thrust of the guidelines for the language policy outlined in this document is to emphasise the need for a truly multilingual university; all other considerations, including aesthetics, need to take cognizance of this.

6.7 The professional body of Maltese translators, interpreters and terminologists that now exist – some working at the institutions of the European Union – have been developing a terminology in MT for use in specific contexts, addressing gaps in domain-specific Maltese terminology.

6.8 The transformation of Malta from a net labour-exporting to a net labour-importing economy in recent decades has brought along with it many consequences. One of these is an increasing number of foreigners working in Malta who, one would expect, would be able to understand, and preferably converse in, not just in EN but also in MT: a basic competence in both official languages is required to operate effectively in Malta's labour market. Hence, there is a growing client base for EN and MT courses geared to help develop basic language competence. UM has responded to this by introducing basic/communicative MT as a requirement for entry into certain professional programmes of study, including the degree in Medicine & Surgery.

6.9 When factoring in the dynamics resulting from 6.8 (above), the contemporary classroom or laboratory environment at UM presents a series of challenges. In most of these learning environments, there is likely to be one or more non-Maltese student/s, presumably,

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<sup>17</sup> In view of the recommendations being made in this document, based on background research and feedback received, a bilingual signage policy is being proposed.

<sup>18</sup> *Ilhna mill-imghoddi / What did the past sound like:* - [https://issuu.com/thinkuni/docs/think33\\_issuu](https://issuu.com/thinkuni/docs/think33_issuu)

with sufficient command in EN to follow their course with profit; alongside them, there are likely to be Maltese students, some of whom may be much more at ease communicating in MT.

6.10 Thus, there are contradictory pressures bearing down on the academics in charge. On one hand, there is the essential resort to EN (also in order to be understood by international students, and to immerse Maltese students into that mind-frame); the importance of communicating in English in the classroom is self-evident. However, what is clear in principle may not always follow in practice as there may be some unintended switching to the use of MT: in order for the academics involved to be better understood by local students, and for them to encourage their vocal participation. This practice may be present in some contexts at UM such as when the academic in charge is (also) one for whom MT is the dominant language. When it happens, and non-Maltese speaking students are present, they are understandably confused, feel left out of the conversation and shortchanged by the system; their complaints often reach the Registrar's Office.

## 7. UM Language Policy as at 2021

7.1 This is the first, consolidated document that provides official guidelines on the use of language at UM. Before these guidelines were approved, the status and regulations governing language emerged from a review of UM's codified protocol. Six extracts are specifically significant:

(a) - The UM General Entry Requirements<sup>19</sup> state that:

The General Entry Requirements are the Matriculation Certificate and a pass at grade 5 or better in the Secondary Education Certificate examinations in English Language, Maltese and Mathematics.

A non-Maltese applicant may be allowed to offer another language as approved by the Admissions Board instead of Maltese. The other language cannot be English, and applicants whose mother tongue is English, shall be required to offer a language other than English instead of Maltese

Applicants who hold dual citizenship, or who become naturalised Maltese citizens, are required to be in possession of a pass in Maltese at SEC level for entry to a course at UM.

(b) - Regulation 12 of the undergraduate (UG) General Regulations states that:

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<sup>19</sup> University of Malta (2021). *Admission FAQs: Entry Requirements*. Retrieved from: <https://www.um.edu.mt/journey/admissionsadvice/admissionsfaqs>

The language of instruction and assessment shall be English, except that, for areas of study involving a language, teaching and assessment may be in that language. Senate may also approve the delivery of a study-unit in Maltese or any other language.

(c) - Regulation 27 of the postgraduate (PG) General Regulations states that:

Dissertations for all postgraduate awards shall be written in English, except that dissertations in areas of study involving a language may be written in that language.

However, following approval by Senate, a Board may allow particular students, for just and sufficient reasons, to write their dissertation in any other language, provided that the Board has ascertained, to the satisfaction of Senate, that the University has the necessary expertise to supervise and examine the work. In such cases, students shall be required to include an Executive Summary of the work in English.

(d) - During the Senate meeting of 17 February 2011, the Rector reminded members that the language of instruction at the University is English:

the language of instruction at the University is English and [the Rector] **reminded** members that questions asked by students and the replies given were to be in English; especially when foreign students were present during lectures.

The Rector **urged** Deans and Directors to remind their members of staff to use English as the language of instruction/tutorials. (*emphasis in original*)

(e) - In 2019, a decision was taken by Senate to encourage all those UM students completing PhD theses to provide an elaborated abstract (circa 5,000 words) of their thesis in the Maltese language, in order to further disseminate the results of their scholarship as well as to steadily build a register of scholarly material available also in Maltese.

(f) - In 2020, Senate adopted a document that outlines good practice in the use of inclusive language; a reminder to the obligation to be sensitive to others, and all the more so in a context of increasing diversity. This includes language preference.<sup>20</sup>

## 8. Terms of Reference and Methodology

8.1 Given this context, the time is right to “maintain a dynamic review of language policy” at and for UM that speaks to the challenges of the present. Such a document – available in EN and MT – would help to:

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<sup>20</sup> University of Malta (2020). *Good practice in inclusive language*. Retrieved from: [https://www.um.edu.mt/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/425229/goodpracticeinclusivelanguage.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/425229/goodpracticeinclusivelanguage.pdf)

- a) Strengthen the awareness of ‘the linguistic question’ on our campus amongst academic staff, administrative and technical staff and students;
- b) Offer useful guidelines and practical recommendations for the use of language in education, research and administration;
- c) Facilitate the development of UM graduates who are bilingual (at a minimum) and trilingual (as a preference);
- d) Support and train UM members of staff to develop proficiency in MT and/or EN and/or additional languages; and
- e) Encourage a ‘language rich’ and ‘parallel language’ campus at UM and support its ‘cascading’ into Maltese society at large.

8.2 To undertake this task, UM staff members from: the Department of Maltese; the Institute of Linguistics and Language Technology; the Department of English; the Department of Sociology; and the Centre for English Language Proficiency were invited to participate and work together to develop this document. A series of conversations took place during Spring 2020, coordinated and chaired by the Office of the Pro-Rector for International Development & Quality Assurance (acting on behalf of Rector).

8.3 This ‘task force’ also conceptualised and organised an online survey in Spring 2020 to better understand the language usage and preferences of the UM community (students, academic staff, and administrative and technical staff). (*A summary of the results of this survey is available as an annex to this document.*)

8.4 It was agreed to seek the advice of the *Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti*, (National Council for the Maltese Language) set up by the Maltese Government in 2005, precisely to adopt, advise on and promote a language strategy and policy in all walks of life in Malta. The *Kunsill*'s detailed advice was received in October 2020, reviewed by the UM ‘working group’ and incorporated into this document.

8.5 Information was also sought from other institutions of higher education around the world who have crafted their own language policy, noting the context in which such policies were contemplated. E.g.: Language Policy of Stockholm University, Language Policy for Uppsala University, and University of Iceland Language Policy. The ‘task force’ also consulted the [Higher Education Language Policy](#) (HELP, 2013), developed by the Working Group of the European Language Council.

8.6 Based on these sources, draft guidelines on the use of language at UM was prepared late in 2020 and presented as a draft to Senate. A three-month period of internal

consultation was subsequently launched. Ninety-three (93) comments and suggestions – mostly in a consolidated format after internal discussion and reflection within units – were tabled via a dedicated email address<sup>21</sup> from 18 different entities and individuals – who included academic and administrative staff members, as well as Maltese and international students – by late April 2021. The document was then: revised and updated with this new information, as relevant; discussed and approved by the ‘task force’<sup>22</sup> set up to run this exercise on June 3<sup>rd</sup>; and presented in its updated form to Senate, to be discussed at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## 9. ‘Best Practices’ for Language Use

9.1 The role of a Language Policy (LP) is to offer guidelines, so that informed decisions can be taken on the language(s) used in particular communicative contexts. This is compatible with the following definition:

“a language policy establishes the languages of instruction and of administration and communication as well as the aims and objectives of language programmes, language support measures and the way in which these are put into practice within a particular Higher Education Institution”<sup>23</sup>.

9.2 At the same time, in order for such guidelines to be properly interpreted, the LP should also lay out a set of general guiding principles, in an effort to both facilitate its implementation and to dispel misunderstandings arising from the attitudes and preconceptions that all users of language inevitably have.

9.3 To do so, such guiding principles need to identify who the LP is *for*; that is: to whom it offers guidelines or suggests ‘best practices’; whose needs it will serve; and whose concerns it will address. Depending on a specific scenario, an individual may be a “stakeholder” in different ways. Thus, we propose to think of the following as roles (acknowledging that one’s role may change as a function of the specific context). At UM, the following roles suggest themselves:

- a) Teacher / instructor / academic staff member (the range includes the grades of visiting lecturer, assistant lecturer up to full professor)
- b) Student (of a taught programme), and including both full time and part time; day and evening; and those involved in both physical, ‘in person’ learning and in ‘on-line’, distance learning;

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<sup>21</sup> [languagelingwa@um.edu.mt](mailto:languagelingwa@um.edu.mt)

<sup>22</sup> Prof. Sergio Portelli joined the task force at this stage; while Dr Lonneke van der Plas was excused.

<sup>23</sup> European Language Council (2013). *Higher education language policy*. Working Group. Retrieved from: [http://www.celelc.org/activities/Working\\_groups/Concluded-Working-Groups/Resources\\_Working\\_Groups/HE\\_Language\\_Policy\\_-\\_Final\\_2013\\_w\\_summary.pdf](http://www.celelc.org/activities/Working_groups/Concluded-Working-Groups/Resources_Working_Groups/HE_Language_Policy_-_Final_2013_w_summary.pdf)

- c) Researchers (including academic staff, research support officers or postgraduate students)
- d) Administrative Staff (e.g. directors, administration specialists)
- e) Industrial and Technical Staff (e.g. beadles, receptionists, IT Services staff)
- f) Members of the general public
- g) Potential students at pre-university stage (e.g. those in secondary schools and 6th forms)
- h) Users, suppliers, service providers and other visitors to the various UM campuses (Msida main campus, Valletta campus, Marsaxlokk campus and Xewkija Gozo campus)

9.4 The following offers an outline of “scenarios of language use” and is intended as an indicative categorisation of situations involving UM members (in different stakeholder roles). For each scenario, we offer an interpretation of the situation in principle and in practice. The last column recommends ‘proposals’ that may address the situation in light of the principles being proposed in these guidelines for the language policy. The last column also proposes the crafting of ‘best practices’: these would be determined in consultation with the FICS or administrative units concerned, and preferably with scholars involved in the study of EN and/or MT and/or other, 3rd languages. Most proposals are informed by the results of the 2020 Language Survey (see annex):

	Relevant Stakeholder role(s)	Official (de jure)	Situation (de facto)	Proposals for ‘Best Practices’
<b>A. Teaching</b>				
<b>A1: Class-based teaching</b>	Lecturers, students	EN, except when teaching other languages, and in courses offered at the University of the Third Age and the Centre for Liberal Arts & Sciences	EN, but with some lapses, as reported by students from time to time	<p>Recognise EN as the ‘official language’ of UM in the classroom (except in language courses); Other languages, however, may have a formal role to play. <i>In specific contexts</i>, MT to be respected as a main medium of communication and expression of specific categories of local students (More details below).</p> <p>Promote study-units in <i>Maltese Communicative Aptitude</i> (MCA).</p> <p>When the lecturer and every student in a class is comfortable with questions being asked and discussions being carried out in MT, then such a practice is not to be considered a breach of regulations. Such language use might help to</p>



				increase student participation and engagement, as well as promote the use of MT in a formal context. However, it is not advisable to replace EN with MT just because the level of EN of some UM students is poor: such an approach would deny such (especially younger) students the opportunity to improve their use of EN. Specific (and non-language-related) study-units or programmes of study may be run in a third language, subject to suitable justification. <sup>24</sup>
<b>A2:</b> Small-group tuition and one-to-one supervision	Lecturers, tutors, students	Mainly EN	Mainly EN; but includes MT with groups of MT speakers; and an intended or unintended mix of EN/MT in other situations	Guidelines required for handling such situations. Encourage UM academics who are conversant in both MT and EN to use their privileged role as mentors to help straddle and overcome linguistic divide amongst students. Concurrently, students should be encouraged to express themselves in EN, if this is their language of assessment.
<b>A3:</b> Courses offered as services to the community (e.g. U3E; PLAS)	Lecturers, students	EITHER EN or MT, preferably specified in advance at application stage	EITHER EN or MT, but in practice possibly a mix of both	Guidelines required to determine how extra-mural courses can serve to disseminate good use of both EN and MT (in oral and written forms). Consider also such courses to serve as a platform for the use of third languages. Lectures meant for a general public could be delivered in MT, unless the audience includes non-MT speakers.

<sup>24</sup> As the Faculty of Theology points out, UM is probably the only university outside Italy that has the expertise to provide study-units or courses for Italian-speaking students.

<b>A4: Dissertations</b>	Tutors, students	EN, except languages, and with Senate's express permission	EN, except languages, and with Senate's express permission	Senate's decision to encourage long abstracts/ executive summaries of dissertations in MT (or in EN, for those written in a language other than EN) is commendable and could be supported with a financial grant, since its uptake is low. An annual on-line UM publication could bring these 'translations' together.
<b>A5: Work Based Learning / Community Engagement<sup>25</sup></b>	Students	MT; but foreigners in the audience may request that proceedings continue in EN	MT; but EN has been used where non-MT speakers are involved	Guidelines required of how to face this situation. UM academics moderating such sessions to be advised to translate questions and remarks fielded in non-MT into MT and then answer in MT & EN. Alternatively, sessions to be held in MT followed by a synopsis in EN; or the other way round. (If so, this format is to be announced in advance). Within workplaces, the language used at the specific place of work needs to be respected.
<b>A6: Written Examinations</b>	Examiners, students	To be held in the language of instruction, which is typically EN. (MT or 3rd language in specific situations, specified in advance)	EN. (MT or 3rd language in specific situations, specified in advance)	Guidelines required as to how to suitably prepare students and academic staff; to ensure quality and consistency, and avoid surprises. Note that, where external examiners are involved, the use of MT for exam purposes may be limited.
<b>A7: Oral Examinations</b>	Examiners, students	To be held in the language of instruction, which is typically EN. (MT or 3rd language in	EN. (MT or 3rd language in specific situations, specified in advance)	Guidelines required as to how to suitably prepare students and academic staff; to ensure quality and consistency, and avoid surprises. Note that, where external examiners are involved, the use of MT is limited.

<sup>25</sup> A number of courses (such as Pharmacy, Medicine, Social Policy & Social Work, Food Sciences, Nursing, Communication Therapy, etc.) have a practical component in the community. For instance, those studying medicine and health subjects experience clinical placements; social work students undergo three practical placements amounting to 34ECTS, or 775 hours; Pharmacy: Year 1, Sem 2: 16 ECTS Internship (community, hospital or pharmaceutical industry internship) and another 16 ECTS in Year 2. For students in the Faculty of Laws who intend practising in the Law Court, competence in the Maltese language is necessary. Any references to local judicial decisions in the UM classroom would involve texts in Maltese and older texts in Italian.

		specific situations, specified in advance)		
<b>A8:</b> After leaving University (e.g., dealing with UM alumni)		EN and/or MT	EN and/or MT	Guidelines required of how to face this situation, especially with mixed audiences.
<b>B. Research</b>				
<b>B1:</b> Purely academic publications	Lecturers, Research Support Officers, Postgraduate students	Mostly in EN; academics publish in the language of their choice	Mostly in EN; academics publish in the language of their choice	UM is considering a policy to encourage and support scholarship in MT and other, non-EN languages, while continuing to support and encourage the dissemination of local research to international audiences. The personal preference of the researcher should also be considered. There is a need for sensitivity to language issues when carrying out or reporting research (even for ethical reasons). For example, quotations by respondents should respect their choice of language (and then be translated, as appropriate).
<b>B2:</b> Publications for the community	Lecturers, Administrative staff	Both EN and MT	Both EN and MT	Produce a broad spectrum publication like THINK Magazine in MT (Strategic Plan); or else ensure MT content in each issue of THINK Magazine.
<b>B3:</b> Fieldwork	Lecturers, Research support officers, students	Both EN and MT	MT and, to a lesser degree, EN	Same language protocol as in the classroom, except that interacting with research subjects in the field would need to reflect and acknowledge their own linguistic preferences, and not just those of the academics and their students.

<b>B4:</b> Language courses for researchers		EN and/or MT and/or 3rd language, specified in advance	EN and/or MT and/or 3rd language, specified in advance	Language courses and other kinds of support for students, researchers and academics who would like to improve their writing and public speaking skills in MT/EN. Such courses to be open to both local and foreign staff and students.
<b>C. Administration</b>				
<b>C1:</b> Selection Boards, Interviews	Members of staff	EN	EN (for academic and administrative staff); mainly MT and some EN for industrial staff	Mainly EN. However, interviews can be run in <i>EN and MT</i> for those academic staff working in units where competence in MT is expected. For certain categories of industrial employees, MT can be mainly used.
<b>C2:</b> Internal mail and email, automatic email replies, newsletter	All students and members of staff	EN	EN; some MT	The default language for internal email correspondence at UM is EN. Institutional emails addressed to the UM community as a whole should be bilingual. The language of any other correspondence, including one-to-one messaging, is at the discretion of the sender, and with a view to effective communication. Such messaging can proceed in MT when all its intended readers are Maltese. For e-mail exchanges between individuals, and especially for those messages that are not likely to be forwarded to third parties, it is courteous and proper to reply in the same language.
<b>C3:</b> Rector's speech, orations	All students, members of staff and the general public		MT and/or EN. Rector's speech at opening of academic year has featured EN & MT.	Ideally using <b>first MT, then EN</b> , as has become current practice in Rector's speeches and addresses. Sign language interpreters to be considered for such events.

<b>C4: Signage</b>	Everyone, including members of the general public	Old signs are mostly bilingual; new signs are EN only as per brand manual	EN, and some bilingual signs	Current UM Brand Manual stipulates EN only. It is recommended that campus signage is bilingual (EN & MT), and sensitive to those with special needs.
<b>C5: Language courses for staff</b>	All members of staff at UM		Communicative MT; MT as a Foreign Language; '3rd languages' as a foreign language	Courses in Communicative Maltese are recommended and are to be made available to all UM staff and students.
<b>C6: Graduation Ceremonies - Orations and Addresses by Graduands and Academics</b>		Either EN or MT	Either EN or MT	Sign language interpreters to be considered for graduation ceremonies and other high profile UM events.

<b>C7: Graduation Ceremonies - Formal texts (read out by Deans; and by Rector when robing graduands)</b>		Latin	Latin (with an EN translation available in the graduation booklet)	Latin (but graduation booklet should translate the formal Latin text into both EN and MT).
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#### **D. Outreach**

<b>D1: <a href="#">UM Website</a></b>		EN (bar a few exceptions)	EN (bar a few exceptions)	76% of the survey respondents indicate a preference for a bilingual website. UM to consider having at least some prominent pages in both EN and MT (Starting with Newspoint?)
<b>D2: Facebook, Instagram, Apps, Newspoint</b>		EN	EN	UM to consider having at least some pages or posts in both EN and MT
<b>D3: Campus FM</b>		Mostly MT	Mostly MT	UM Strategic Plan (Table 4), in order to serve as a more effective medium for outreach. Some programming in EN should be

				considered if the aim is also to reach foreign listeners and for the sake of inclusion.
<b>D4:</b> THINK Magazine		EN	EN	UM Strategic Plan (Table 4), in order to serve as a more effective medium for outreach. THINK is deemed a ‘successful outreach initiative’.
<b>D5:</b> Science in the City		Written material often in EN; oral communication in MT	Written material often in EN; oral communication in MT	As an event for the general public, all material should be bilingual (EN & MT).
<b>D6:</b> Brochures, leaflets ...		Written material often in EN	Written material often in EN	Bilingual (EN & MT), if meant for the general public.
<b>D7:</b> TV and Radio (Radju Mocha)		Mostly MT	Mostly MT	UM has in-house expertise in the translation and localisation of audio-visual content, including an inclusive subtitling mode customised for local EN and MT demands, and from which the hearing impaired can benefit. Sign language interpretation to be considered. Meanwhile, researchers who are not MT-speaking should still be encouraged to participate and promote their work in EN.
<b>D8:</b> Evenings on Campus		Mostly MT, but some performances in EN	Mostly MT, but some performances in EN	Accompanying material to be bilingual (EN & MT), if meant for the general public.

## 10. Discretion

10.1 UM administrators and academics increasingly find themselves in situations where the use of a specific language may not be clear, obvious and unproblematic. They may find themselves, at different times, or perhaps *at the same time*, dealing with one or more of the stakeholders and associated roles described above, and possibly more beyond. As professionals and educators, as well as administrative staff and students, the many and diverse members of the UM community are expected to rise to the challenge and respond in what they may deem as the most appropriate manner in the specific circumstance.

10.2 This document, with guidelines on the use of language at UM, proposes a set of parameters within which a number of best practices can be established to address such circumstances.

10.3 This document also suggests that such scenarios, and the challenges that they present, feature in the professional development courses and training sessions being regularly offered to academic staff; and are brought up at the regular meetings held by UM Directors with their administrative staff.

## 11. Applicability

11.1 The guidelines on the use of language at UM in this document, once adopted, would apply to all aspects and sites of UM's operations, including the Junior College, the Valletta Campus, the Xewkija/Gozo Campus, the Marsaxlokk Campus and the University's companies.

11.2 Just like the language policy that it serves, this is a living document: it remains sensitive to the 'signs and voices of the times', and would benefit from a regular review.

11.3 A language policy needs to work and evolve in tandem with other policy documents that have been developed at UM and will continue to be developed from time to time. And *vice versa*: any such documents need to take the content and spirit of the Language Policy on board.<sup>26</sup>

11.4 UM is the main university in the world which safeguards *il-Malti*. UM will persevere in supporting the Department of Maltese and the Institute for Linguistics and Language Technology, amongst others, to develop the digital tools necessary and required for Maltese to thrive as a living language in a digital age; and to support and promote the study of Maltese culture in all its forms, and as it affects and impacts on all disciplines and areas of study and learning.

11.5 Meanwhile, the UM community needs to remain proactive and vigilant such that a good command of the English language remains significant, not just on the UM campus but across the Maltese Islands. A good working knowledge of EN (apart from MT) is imperative for many episodes of social interaction: not just at UM but beyond, in Maltese society: from being able to read a technical manual to dealing with non-MT speaking colleagues, customers, clients, neighbours or patients.

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<sup>26</sup> A case in point is the Migrant Access Policy - *Broadening Access for, and Supporting, Students with a Migrant and Low Socio-Economic Background at the University of Malta* – under discussion at the time of writing.

11.6 As the University of Malta, we are called upon to support flexible, heteroglossic practices in our approach to a bilingual – but also preferably multi-lingual – language strategy.

11.7 All staff at UM, and academic staff in particular, are to be aware and conscious of their own use of language in order to ensure good pedagogical practices and effective communication.

11.8 Additionally, in the past 10 years, and more so in the last five years, there has been a steep rise in the number of non-Maltese nationals who have decided to settle in Malta and are now part of our community. The foreign student and staff population at UM also continues to grow. This document cites various studies that have focussed on survey respondents who self-reported on their language competences and preferences; however, this is a rapidly changing landscape. In the circumstance where technology and demographic patterns evolve so rapidly, it is difficult to rely on past linguistic studies to inform the present or to use them as today's baseline for future language policies. Thus, in order to make informed decisions on language use in Malta and at UM, regular research is necessary; and any policies that may have merit today may need to be revisited and reconsidered tomorrow.

## 12. FAQ Format

12.1 Clearly, there are specific situations that require guidelines. What to do in the following or similar situations could take the form of a 'Frequently Asked Question' (FAQ) format, and be integrated in a dynamic language policy. These situations include.

- a) Student in class who asks questions in Maltese (with or without international students being present);
- b) Student indicates a preference for Maltese (or other language other than English) in a supervisory setting, or for an oral examination/*viva voce*;
- c) Placement or other off-campus activity for which a student may not have the requisite *EN and MT* linguistic skills (e.g. international students in a placement which assumes Maltese as the medium of communication).
- d) Subject to the approval of Senate and in accordance with current regulations, identify the *specific* circumstances and protocols whereby a UM student would be allowed to write an assignment, dissertation, project or thesis, or undertake an oral exam, in the Maltese language, even if the assignment, dissertation, project, thesis or oral exam is not *about* the Maltese language, or submitted as part of a



programme of studies in Maltese studies.<sup>27</sup> Such students would need to be guaranteed suitable supervision as well as qualified internal and external examiners. Such a measure would also help to accelerate the development of suitable terminology in MT.

### 13. Support structures

13.1 A permanent language policy sub-committee of Senate is being recommended. Its terms of reference would include: to take periodic stock of the linguistic landscape at UM and the broader context; draft FAQs, provide oversight for the implementation of UM's language policy, and table suggestions for updates and revisions to UM's Language Policy.

13.2 Additional and specific support structures are proposed to improve UM's standing as a pluri-linguistic environment. These may include the UM taking, or consolidating, initiatives such as:

- a) Offering language support for students and (academic, industrial, technical) staff who may not be sufficiently competent in English and/or Maltese. On this note, UM should consider setting up a *Centre for Maltese Language Proficiency*, similar to the one that has been set up for English.<sup>28</sup> Should a route for *Maltese Communicative Aptitude* (MCA) be explored, then the target group would need to be identified, its needs assessed, and how students would benefit from it mapped out.
- b) Providing tuition in the Maltese language in a bid to help its international staff members - which are increasing - integrate better in Maltese society. Such a provision should also apply to international students interested in integrating better in Maltese society during their stay in Malta (rather than sticking to their native language and/or EN bubble). Study-units in communicative MT should also be offered to Maltese students at UM (and not just foreign students or non-MT speaking local students). After all, various work-based or practice-based learning settings require a command of both EN and MT.
- c) Ensuring that administrative services at UM cater for users of both English and Maltese, especially in *oral communication* with administrators.

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<sup>27</sup> A suitable example here is the Reflective Diary, which is part of the assessment for fieldwork placements and other study units, such as YTH1009 and YTH 1014 – Youth Work Core Skills. Some students are bound to express themselves better in MT when they reflect on their personal experiences. In such a scenario, the readers/examiners of such Reflective Diaries would, of course, need to be competent in MT.

<sup>28</sup> A study conducted with the 2018-2020 cohort of the Centre for English Language Proficiency recorded a significant improvement in EN speaking and writing.

- d) Supporting individuals with *specific communication needs*. These include members of the Deaf community, visually impaired people who may have difficulty reading/writing, and users of Alternative/Augmentative Means of Communication. The latter may use assistive devices to communicate.
- e) Encouraging FICS to develop *Maltese terminology* for their specific fields. This would be part of an effort to broaden public access to knowledge and ensure suitable use of language outside of University structures.<sup>29</sup>
- f) Including *communicative MT language courses and assessment* in all those programmes of study at UM where there is a community practice/service component.
- g) Consider expanding the offering of professional development courses that focus on *academic writing* in EN and/or MT.
- h) Considering classes in the Maltese language – for native speakers, resident non-speakers and/or international staff and/or students – to bolster the legitimacy of the use of the Maltese language; to promote an appreciation of the local cultural context; and to impart academic confidence among local students.
- i) Considering the engagement qualified *proof-readers* for UM material drafted in both EN and MT; as well as qualified translators for producing syntheses of dissertations and theses in MT (for those written in EN); and vice versa.
- j) Acknowledging and promoting, but also developing where necessary – in association with relevant external stakeholders – discipline-specific terminology in MT, in order to ascertain that UM students are better able to operate in a local context.
- k) Considering the offering of *interpretation services* for certain UM events and activities.
- l) In association with the relevant national authorities, supporting the development of suitable technological pedagogical tools – such as *čekkjatur/i* (*Maltese spell checker/s*) and *on-line Maltese dictionaries* – to support the use of correct Maltese, as behoves a national language.

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<sup>29</sup> Consider this example from the LP at Uppsala University, Sweden: “Under the Language Act, government agencies such as the University “have a special responsibility for ensuring that Swedish terminology in their various areas of expertise is used and developed”. Retrieved from: [https://regler.uu.se/digitalAssets/760/c\\_760756-l\\_1-k\\_sprakpolicy-final-en1.pdf](https://regler.uu.se/digitalAssets/760/c_760756-l_1-k_sprakpolicy-final-en1.pdf)

## **ANNEX - Results of On-Line Survey amongst UM students, administrative staff and academic staff in Spring 2020**

### **Methodology**

The survey was designed and administered in Spring 2020. Three versions were constructed: for students; academic staff; and administrative, technical and industrial staff. Each of these versions was available in either Maltese or English.

The three versions of the survey had a common core of questions focussing on demographic information, language attitudes and use of language on campus. Depending on the cohort, the questionnaires differed with respect to an additional set of questions about language use in University scenarios relevant to the cohort.

The survey was circulated among all staff and students through the Office of the Registrar. For the purposes of analysis, results from the English and Maltese versions of the survey were collated. *A total of 887 valid responses were secured.*

### **Respondents**

The number of respondents in each group, and the choice of language to respond ('Lang'), is summarised below.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Lang</b>	<b>No.</b>
<i>Academic</i>	<i>MT</i>	79
	<i>EN</i>	183
<i>Administrative (including Industrial &amp; Technical Grades)</i>	<i>MT</i>	94
	<i>EN</i>	124
<i>Student</i>	<i>MT</i>	154
	<i>EN</i>	253
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>887</b>

Responses ranged across all University faculties, institutes, centres and schools. However, the largest single batch of responses was received from staff and students of the Faculty of Arts (49 academic staff and 68 students).

Among academics, there was a majority of male respondents (m 152, f 103; 1 non-binary; 6 prefer not to say). In contrast, there were more female respondents among students (f 250; m 151; 2 non-binary; 5 prefer not to say) and non-academic staff (f 141; m 81; 5 prefer not to say).

## **Summary of Main Findings**

### **Caveat**

The findings presented below represent an “executive summary”, based on a statistical analysis of the data collected. For the purposes of the present document, findings are restricted to the main variables, and are described with a view to shedding light on the opinions and attitudes of respondents. Given this brief, certain potentially interesting avenues of analysis, such as the exploration of relationships between variables (e.g. a respondent’s Faculty, their role at UM and their language preferences) are not included here. A full report of the findings will be presented separately.

### **Language use and self-reported proficiency**

- On campus, students and academics report a greater proportion of time using English, compared to Maltese. This is not the case for administrative staff, who overall report using Maltese more than English in a university context. For all other contexts (communicating with family, friends, and in private), all respondents irrespective of their role report a greater proportion of time on average using Maltese than English.
- Participants self-reported different levels of proficiency in writing, as compared to reading, speaking or understanding, in Maltese versus English:
  - For writing and reading, irrespective of their role on campus, participants self-reported a higher degree of proficiency in English than in Maltese.
  - While self-reported proficiency in understanding was higher for English than Maltese among academics, the two languages were at par among students, and non-academics.
  - For speaking, academics self-reported higher fluency in English than Maltese, while the opposite trend can be observed among students and non-academic staff, the difference being more marked among the latter.

- Most participants (63% to 87% across all groups) view a high degree of proficiency in both English and Maltese as desirable. Proficiency in English is perceived as more crucial than in Maltese.

### **Language attitudes and cultural identification**

- Participants were asked to self-rate their agreement with the statement I feel most like myself when I speak ... Practically equal percentages of academics 'feel like themselves' when they speak Maltese (67%) and English (68%). More respondents from administrative staff and students are at ease speaking Maltese (72%, 66%) compared to speaking English (52%, 52% respectively).
- Participants were asked to self-rate their agreement with the statement I identify with a culture that is ... Respondents in all three participant groups self-reported a higher degree of identification with a Maltese-speaking culture; this trend is far more pronounced among students and non-academic staff, compared to academics.

### **Language on campus**

- Most respondents view the university as bilingual (57%; multilingual 17%; monolingual EN 25%; monolingual MT 1%).
- Asked whether they believe the language situation as they perceive it should change, the responses clearly depend on how the situation is viewed in the first place: respondents whose experience of the University is that it is monolingual in Maltese, view this situation as requiring change. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the view of UM as monolingual Maltese is held by a very small minority (1% of respondents overall).
- In all respondent groups, the majority disagree that signage or the *um.edu.mt* website should be exclusively monolingual in Maltese. The responses were more variable for the question whether signage and website should be monolingual in English. However, a very clear majority responded in favour of both signage and website being bilingual, in Maltese and English, with most respondents saying they 'agree' with this (Signage: academics = 78%; non-academics = 85%; students = 83%. Website: academics = 67%; non-academics = 75%; students = 85%).

### **Language in the classroom (academics)**

- Inside and outside classrooms:
  - A majority (62%) deliver lectures exclusively in English
  - A narrow majority (51%) speak to students in their classes exclusively in English, with around 25% claiming that they mix Maltese and English when directly addressing students.

- There is a more marked tendency to mix the two languages outside of the classroom.
- In other communication:
  - Most academics prefer English for writing academic papers and messages.
  - For staff meetings, there is a tendency to prefer a mixture of English and Maltese.

### **Language in the classroom (students)**

- Most students (87%) find it easy to follow lectures in English; however, a sizable proportion also stated they would find it easy to follow lectures in Maltese (72%) or a mixture of Maltese and English (71%).
- The level of agreement with the statement whether students prefer lectures to be in English, Maltese or a choice among the two follows a similar distribution, but there is less marked agreement with English as the sole language of instruction (66% selected 'agree'.)
- There is no clear preference for either Maltese or English when speaking in and out of class but a high number feel very comfortable using English in the classroom.

### **Examinations**

- Both students and academics show a tendency for preferring exams in English. This is more marked for academics.
- Among students, a sizable proportion also agrees that exams should be in both English and Maltese: 52% (agree), 9% (mildly agree); compared to 59% (agree) and 12% (mildly agree) to have exams only in EN; 12% (agree) and 8% (mildly agree) to have exams only in Maltese.

### **Communication with colleagues**

- Most academic and administrative staff use English at least some of the time when communicating with colleagues; for both groups, there is a marked tendency to use both languages but more academics use English only, while significantly more admin staff use Maltese only.
- Non-academic staff prefer to use English only, or a mixture of Maltese and English in work-related communication.
- For writing reports or messages, non-academic staff prefer English; whereas, for meetings, there is a stronger preference for a mixture of the two languages.

## Interest in languages other than Maltese and English

Respondents were asked to rate their interest in taking extra-curricular courses in Maltese, English or a variety of other languages, assuming these were available to them.

- For Maltese, a majority of students and non-academic staff responded that they would be interested in enhancing their skills in Maltese. The reverse trend was observed among academics.
- Among both students and academic staff, a majority expressed a lack of interest in taking extracurricular tuition in English. Among non-academic staff, the responses were evenly divided.
- Similar questions were asked about Arabic, German, Spanish, French and Italian. With the possible exception of French (52% no; 48% yes), academics mostly stated that they were not interested in extra-curricular courses. Among students, a similar trend was observed for Arabic, German and French, while a majority expressed interest in courses for Italian and Spanish. Among non-academic staff, a sizable majority expressed an interest in extracurricular courses in Italian, French and Spanish, with a clearly opposing trend in the case of Arabic and German.

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