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Guidelines for
linguistic diversity
at the University of
Konstanz

1. Preamble

Linguistic diversity is protected under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU). The European Commission highlights the value of linguistic diversity in the EU as well as its importance for staff employability, social cohesion and mobility.

Surveys at the University of Konstanz regularly confirm the impressive linguistic diversity of its members: 14 different languages are used for university study and research in addition to many other languages used in everyday campus life. This linguistic diversity is a central part of our "Konstanz spirit": We engage with different cultures and collaborate in line with our shared motto "creative.together".

Respectful, effective communication lays the foundation for excellent conditions for university research, teaching, study and work in local, national and international contexts. As the leading academic language, English plays a key role in the university's goal to maintain its ties and relevance worldwide. At the same time, it is essential to preserve the university's distinct character and respect its regional and national context by reflecting linguistic reality in Germany (the German language, along with its dialects and the various other languages used by the country's residents). Communicating in German is the basis for participation in university life as well as for science communication and transfer to society.

The goal of our guidelines for linguistic diversity at the University of Konstanz is to describe how we envision using languages to effectively communicate with each other, with the intention of fostering an environment in which all of our members are treated with respect. These guidelines are intended to help processes at the university work smoothly, avoiding tensions among its members and promoting a collaborative academic environment. University members should have the opportunity to communicate with each other in German, English or, where appropriate, in other languages without discriminating against or being discriminated against by others. This approach fosters respectful interactions with each other in line with our guidelines on fair communication.

These guidelines aim to

- Consider the interests of different groups by recognizing that we must include both global and local perspectives.
- Recognize the linguistic diversity of German society and underscore the importance of preserving non-dominant languages and dialects.
- Encourage members of the university community to see linguistic diversity as an enrichment for the workplace.
- Share flexible options for implementation and promote an inclusive approach that addresses the challenges and potential feelings of exclusion that can come from having limited knowledge of the dominant languages.
- Foster passive understanding of German and English as two key working languages while recognizing the importance of other languages for scientific discourse where their use is appropriate and useful.
- Raise awareness for existing resources and support services in addition to encouraging university members to utilize these options for improving their language skills.

2. Inclusive communication

At the University of Konstanz, we consider linguistic diversity to be a cornerstone for our academic community and an opportunity for creative collaboration. We recognize the importance of inclusive communication and thus foster a university culture that encourages the active participation of each of its members. The focus is on the following aspects:

1. **Communication for the university community:** Ideally, important announcements, forms and websites should be provided in both German and English so that every university member has equal access to information and opportunities for participation.
2. **Meetings of university bodies:** We support a flexible use of language that fosters the participation of all university members in discussions by encouraging the use of receptive language skills and code switching – i.e. flexibly switching between English, German and other languages – to promote greater inclusion and understanding among participants. We recommend that university bodies regularly take time to reflect on their language usage together.
3. **Digital and print information:** It is a priority that important information be available in both German and English.
4. **Job announcements:** Announcing job openings in relevant languages promotes the international reach and diversity of our university community.
5. **Signs on campus:** For the future, we may consider introducing new signs that either contain multiple languages or that use images instead of words in order to create an even more welcoming campus environment.
6. **Everyday communication:** At our university, we foster an environment in which all members are accepted, treated with respect, communicate freely with each other, and where no one faces discrimination for the language they use with others. To this end, we support university members with recognizing and actively preventing (unconscious) discrimination on the basis of language.

Our ultimate goal is to foster an integrative, respectful and globally connected academic environment at our university.

3. Support and recommendations

	<i>How the university would like to support you</i>	<i>What we recommend</i>
Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to attract international talent to the university, we make it possible to conduct research in Konstanz without having German skills. • We would like to enable researchers to understand and complete administrative tasks, even if they do not have German skills. • In order to reduce administrative barriers, internal applications for research or transfer funding may be submitted in English or German. • To foster greater integration and career opportunities in Germany, we offer German courses for researchers. Supervisors encourage and enable employees to acquire language skills, including during working hours. • We provide support for academic writing in English and German to ensure good text quality. • We provide translation and proofreading services to facilitate science communication. • We offer events, training and material that fosters reflection on linguistic diversity in the research context. • We promote a culture of communication in research teams that is free of discrimination and respects linguistic diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend that university members continually develop their academic language skills, both in German and in English, in order to remain competitive in the global academic context. • To share knowledge and ensure wide global reception, we recommend university members make their research internationally visible by providing at least an English abstract for their work and, if possible, publishing work regularly in English. • In research contexts where English is the dominant language, it may even be useful to occasionally publish research in other relevant languages (e.g. to maintain a diversity of academic languages, including German; or to communicate with relevant researchers who do not take part in the research dialogue using the English language). We would like to encourage researchers to reflect upon the potential relevance of these considerations for their own research contexts. • We recommend that everyone whose first language is not German acquire at least everyday language skills in German as this fosters better general communication and overall integration. • Researchers whose employment contracts last at least three years are encouraged to continually develop their receptive German language skills further, e.g. in order to work more effectively in university bodies and be able to navigate the academic environment better. • We support the transfer of research results at the local level in the language of the majority population – German, in our case – as well as other widely spoken languages in order to make it easier for the local population to access and see the relevance of this research. • We also recommend regularly reflecting on the language(s) used to communicate in working groups, research colloquia, conferences and workshops at the university.

How the university would like to support you**Students and teaching staff**

- We strive to offer courses in languages other than German (preferably English) in all subject areas to enrich the international study experience of our exchange students.
- We offer study programmes that can be completed without German skills, so that international students, too, can take part.
- We support providing international teaching staff with specialized intensive German courses (business German) in order to foster better integration and help them grow the skills to teach courses in German.
- We would like to ensure that students and teaching staff can understand and complete administrative tasks, even if they do not have German skills, as this will make it easier to organize study and teaching.
- We encourage students and teaching staff to actively contribute their own linguistic diversity to classes in order to expand learning beyond the German and English languages.
- We support events, workshops and training for teaching staff on the topic of multilingual didactics.
- To promote linguistic diversity, we facilitate the acquisition of skills in foreign languages that are not the main languages of instruction. Where appropriate, such courses can be integrated into the curriculum of bachelor's and master's programmes.

What we recommend

- We recommend continuing to develop academic language skills, especially in German and English, in order to provide optimum language quality for study, research and teaching.
 - We recommend that everyone whose first language is not German acquire at least everyday language skills in German as this fosters better everyday communication and social integration at work.
 - We recommend that, three years after beginning work at the university, international teaching staff have German skills that enable them to teach in German and fully participate in all aspects of academic life in Konstanz.
 - In addition to this, it is desirable to develop skills in other languages in order to foster greater cultural diversity and exchange within the academic community.
 - We recommend that all students and teaching staff reflect on their own language skills (e.g. by participating in corresponding events, workshops or training).
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How the university would like to support you***What we recommend***

Academic support staff

- We use technical solutions and training in a way that is suitable for the context in order to break down language barriers and ensure smoother workflows.
 - We promote making language skills visible in the workplace, for example, by labelling office doors accordingly and including multilingual email signatures.
 - We support providing language training, especially for improving receptive language skills. Supervisors encourage and enable employees to acquire language skills, including during working hours.
 - We would like to accurately and thoroughly take stock of current and possibly changing language requirements for staff members in order to ensure they are treated fairly and can perform the corresponding tasks.
 - We recognize that staff need the time and resources to get language training and take this into account in our expectations regarding participation in such training.
 - If necessary, we provide translation services to facilitate the flow and accessibility of information.
 - We support regular reflection on how to foster a communication culture at our university where our members do not experience discrimination on the basis of their language skills.
- We promote using code switching to flexibly shift between English, German and other languages in conversations and discussions where this strengthens communication and fits the context.
 - To enable university members to engage in code switching, we encourage them to improve their passive language skills in order to foster effective communication and greater understanding in multilingual contexts.
 - We encourage the use of spontaneous, mobile technical solutions for both written and oral communication.
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The German version of these guidelines was adopted by the Senate of the University of Konstanz at its meeting on January 31, 2024.