Project report for a proposal for a language policy at KI

Project team 2024-02-20

Machine translated, for original version, see the Swedish document.

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Content

Summary of the project's proposal for a language policy at KI

The aim of the project has been to develop a policy that creates clarity, increases awareness of language use, promotes equal opportunities, and strengthens the experience of a global and collaborating university.

The project's steering group has consisted of Mats J Olsson, Miriam Nauri and Bob Harris under the leadership of Peter Andréasson. The project group has consisted of representatives from different parts of KI's professional services, led by Emma Hägg.

The basis for the policy consists of a collection of data from an internal survey, experiences from other higher education institutions and expert support.

The project and the conclusions from the project have been presented to heads of department, administrative managers, and heads of division. Drafts have been presented to the steering committee, revised and the final draft policy has been prepared with committees, the faculty board, KI's management team and the General Counsel. The proposal is also a collaboration with students and trade unions.

The assignment was commissioned by the University Director and the proposal was decided by the President.

Background

KI is an internationally renowned medical university open to forge strategic partnerships beyond Sweden's borders, drawing researchers and students globally. With a multicultural environment, it boasts a diverse workforce proficient in multiple languages, predominantly English. Instruction occurs in both Swedish and English, while research is primarily conducted in English, and clinical activities typically operate in Swedish.

In accordance with the Swedish Language Act, Swedish is designated as the primary language, placing special emphasis on its use and development within specialized domains by authorities. The dual nature of KI, functioning as both a Swedish government agency and an international institution, presents unique challenges regarding language usage.

While existing governing documents address bilingualism on KI's central website, the formulation of a comprehensive language policy has been overdue.

Purpose and goal

A language policy aims to provide employees with guidance on overall language issues and support in the University's efforts to maintain high quality in all parts of its operations.

A strategically thought-out and coordinated use of language at KI means that we live up to legislation and requirements for legal certainty, which contributes to increased confidence in KI. According to the Language Act (2009:600), the language used by Swedish authorities must be cultivated, simple and comprehensible. Swedish authorities also have a responsibility to protect the Swedish language, and higher education institutions should use, develop and make available Swedish terminology in their various academic disciplines.

A well-thought-out approach to parallel language use, i.e. the simultaneous use of English and Swedish, also contributes to a strengthened brand.
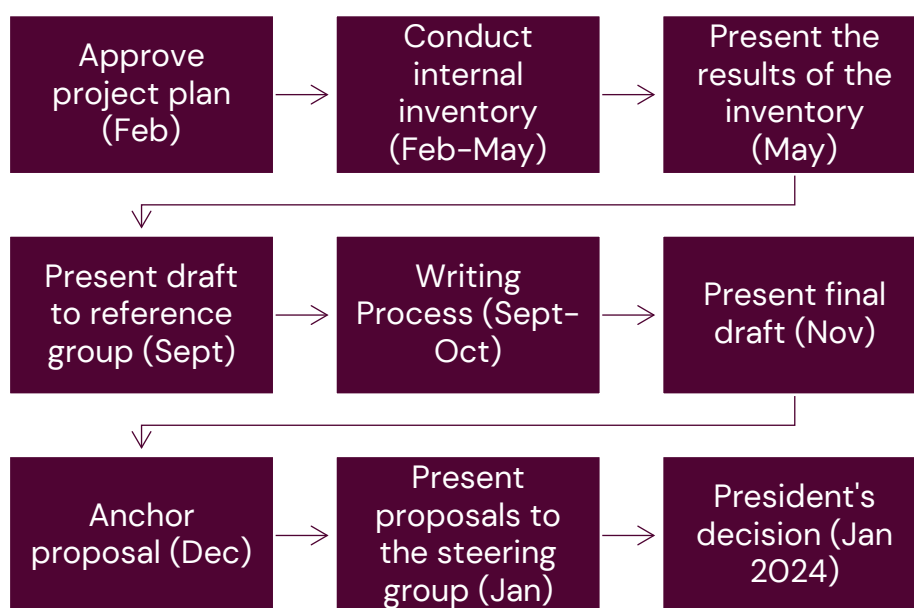
Project description

Project objectives

The aim of the project was to develop a proposal for a language policy at Karolinska Institutet (KI)

Impact targets

- Clarity regarding language use across all areas of operation.
- Increased language awareness.
- Promoting equal opportunties.
- Strengthen the experience of a global and collaborative university.

Timeplan

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Approve project    →   Conduct internal   →   Present the
plan (Feb)             inventory              results of the
                       (Feb-May)              inventory (May)
                                                    │
                                                    ▼
Present draft to   →   Writing Process    →   Present final
reference group        (Sept-Oct)             draft (Nov)
(Sept)                                              │
                                                    ▼
Anchor proposal    →   Present proposals  →   President's
(Dec)                  to the steering        decision (Jan
                       group (Jan)            2024)
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Implementation of the project

From the outset, participants in the project agreed about the importance of involving all areas of operation and striving for broad consensus.

Internal mapping

During the spring of 2023, an internal assessment of language usage at KI was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The selection of interviewees was done collaboratively by the project team.

Approximately 20 individuals, chosen based on the collective knowledge of the project team, from professional services, departments, research, education, and leadership, were interviewed. The interviews highlighted the pressing relevance of language issues. The responses, summarized in a preliminary study, primarily addressed langugage awareness/understanding, exclusion/inclusion, participation, and the international environment (see Appendix 1).

Based on the results of the preliminary study, the project team invited a reference group comprising interested individuals from across the organization to a workshop aimed at supplementing the findings of the study. The workshop focused on how an overarching language policy would impact employees and students with diverse language backgrounds and needs. Three groups discussed issues related to language usage, language learning, language requirements, language support, language proficiency, and linguistic diversity at KI. The groups agreed that a language policy is necessary, considering it crucial and relevant to everyone at KI. Particularly, a language policy was deemed essential for fostering a more transparent, inclusive, and democratic working and studying environment at KI. Furthermore, participants emphasized the need for increased dialogue, information dissemination, support, and resources to effectively address language–related matters. They also stressed the utmost importance of mutual understanding. The reference group had the opportunity to provide written feedback on an initial draft of the language policy.

Both HR and Equal Opportunities were absent from the reference group's workshop. Therefore, separate meetings were held with Kristina Ullgren (Coordinator for Equal Opportunities) and the HR Council (September 19, 2023) to ensure their perspectives were incorporated into the work.

Business intelligence and expert support
The project has drawn inspiration and insights from the language policies of other higher education institutions. In total, the project has reviewed around twenty different language policies. Interviews were conducted with coordinators from KTH, who are working on updating a language policy from 2010, and Umeå University, which has established a Language Council ("språkråd") to support language use within the organization. The project

also maintained regular contact with [Esko Koponen at the University of Helsinki](#) for expert support throughout the process. Esko Koponen specializes in strategic support for education at the University of Helsinki, where he is responsible for strategic planning and management of international education, language policy matters, and joint educational programmes.

Writing process

The project team actively involved all members in the drafting process. Each member contributed expertise from their respective areas of support within the organization. Input and results from interviews and the reference group were incorporated into the text work. Since the policy document serves as guidance only, proposals for concrete actions requiring budget allocation were moved out of the final policy and included at the end of this report.

Success factors

There is significant engagement with language issues at KI, and it has been advantageous to lead a project on a topic that affects so many. The project prioritized broad consensus to ensure that as many people as possible from the organization could identify with the policy proposal. The composition of both the project team and the steering group ensured comprehensive perspectives from across the organization and brought diverse expertise to the table. Although the student representative was appointed late in the project, they helped validate drafts within the student body and raised student concerns and opinions. In-depth interviews, workshops with the reference group, and consultations with staff and students in various forums were also valuable for the project and its alignment.

In many parts of the organisation, operational documents related to the use of language have already been developed. A language policy is eagerly awaited to serve as comprehensive guidance on issues of language use, as such a policy has not existed before.

Risks, deviations, and their management

The project had a very ambitious timetable from the beginning, but in consultation with the steering group, the project has allowed the project to take longer. Mainly, the process of gaining consensus has taken longer than planned, but it has also been crucial for the project's outcomes and for how

the project members hope the language policy will be received by the organisation.

Organisation, roles, and division of responsibilities

The steering group has been led by Peter Andréasson. The steering group also included Bob Harris, Miriam Nauri and Mats J Olsson. Student representative was Tea Genberg (MF).

The project group, coordinated by Emma Hägg at Faculty Office and International Relations, consisted of: ·

- Maria Schönnings, Strategic Management Office
- Madeleine Svärd Huss, Communications and Public Relations Office
- Sandra Helminen, HR Office
- Lisa Norberg, Legal Office
- Kristina Froelich, Karolinska Institutet University Library
- Talia Adamsson, Education Support Office (replaced Jenny Enblom in September 2023)
- Unit for Teaching and Learning (UoL): contributed to the work through participation in a reference group.

Communication and preparation

The project setup was presented to Acting University Director Gunnar Gustafsson Wiss (2023–01–26), and thereafter, steering and project groups were established based on proposals from department heads and the Acting University Director. The Acting University Director was briefed through an initial presentation, followed by informing University Director Veronika Sundström (assumed office 2023–04–17) during a progress review (2023–11–22) and in the project's final stages regarding alignment and the proposal's final form.

The steering group convened on five occasions and was kept informed via email as needed. The project group met regularly, either digitally or physically, once or twice a month during term time and collaborated using project management tools such as Teams. Meetings were documented with minutes, and all participants contributed within their working hours. No project budget was allocated.

In March 2023, a project plan was finalized, and a page about the project (in both Swedish and English) was published on KI's Staff portal. The preliminary study conducted by the project group was also published on the same page. The project and webpage were presented at a communicators' network meeting (2023-05-22) and at a meeting for the professional services (2023-05-23).

In December, the project and the cornerstone aspects of the proposal were presented to the department heads (2023-12-15) and to administrative heads and managers (2023-12-18).

The final proposal for the language policy was presented at all committees and the faculty board (2024-01-26, 2024-01-30, 2024-01-31) and discussed with students (2024-01-30) and trade unions (2024-01-26 and 2024-02-02).

The matter was prepared for the President on 2024-01-23 and is scheduled for decision on 2024-02-20.

Recommendations from the project team

The cornerstones upon which language usage at KI should rest, as outlined in the proposal for the policy, are central. The policy encourages reflection and, in some cases, a change in approach to include everyone in KI's everyday work life—both as an authority and a global university.

Throughout the project, additional needs for language support within the organization have emerged. Examples of support that could be developed include:

- Internal translation services
- Tailored language training in Swedish and English for administrators, doctoral students, teachers, and researchers
- Collaboration within the Stockholm Trio on language skills training
- Expanded support from "Språkverkstaden" to include staff.
- Organization-specific adjustments for language usage in various parts of the organization.
- Consolidated language resources on KI's website.

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Implementation

In parallel with the visible commitment from KI leadership, it is important to focus on implementation at the operational level and to create a shared understanding and participation among employees. By discussing and collaborating, we can ensure that the changes truly have an impact and are integrated into our daily operations.

The results from the internal preliminary study and workshop indicate that the areas of use for English and Swedish at KI often differ. Therefore, it is important to be attentive to these differences and to adapt language choice according to the context. Both managers and employees are responsible for actively contributing to this adaptation and ensuring that language choice supports the organization's goals and purposes. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and efficient work environment at KI.

Some key factors for successful implementation include:

- Functional support linked to the language policy that can assist the organization in its use.
- Resources to support the organization's need for language support.

Scientific terminology
To ensure that scientific terminology exists, is developed, and is used in both Swedish and English, a working group should be established consisting of individuals with expertise in KI's various teaching and research areas. Terminological expertise should be included in the group.

Online language support for employees
Through Esko Koponen, expert in the field, the project has encountered the [Language Boost project,](#) which was launched in April 2023. Språkboost develops Finnish and Swedish language teaching to better meet the language needs of international employees. The [concrete tips and advice for multilingual workplaces that have been developed within Språkboost](#) could be made available to strengthen language awareness and parallel language use at KI.

The website developed for the project could also be enhanced, for example, by consolidating internal and external language support resources such as

glossaries, recommendations regarding various translation tools, and support for language skills development.

Language requirements and language skills development
Investigating how language requirements are communicated during recruitments and how expectations regarding potential language skills development are communicated to employees is necessary.

Language studies can be offered by various providers, and information about language skills development opportunities for employees should be better communicated and encouraged internally. While KI offers contracted competence training in English for administrative and academic staff, it is relatively unknown. KTH offers customized language studies through its Language and Communication department and has expressed interest in discussing potential collaboration further.

Opportunities for collaboration in language among the Stockholm Trio (KI, KTH, and SU) could also be further explored.

Delivery, handover, and acceptance
The proposal for the language policy, after alignment with all committees, Faculty Board, and KI's leadership, was presented at the steering group meeting on 2024-02-07 and is thus ready for the President's decision on 2024-02-20.

Document
Appendix 1 Pre-study – interviews about language use at KI (tool translated version)