

# Language Code of Conduct EEMCS

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All degree programmes at the faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science are English-language programmes, and in some of them more than half of the enrolled students are international. As a student, of course you know this; but there are consequences that you may not be directly aware of, and that merit some clarification. In this document we list some of those consequences and provide such clarification. A short summary (but do read on for the full version):

- English should be the used language in all teaching-related situations, for both written and verbal communication.
- You may expect all teaching materials to be provided in English only. An exception is when elements of Dutch or any other culture are used for illustrative purposes.
- This document is providing a set of guidelines and recommendations – a so-called "code of conduct" – aiming at stimulating the development of a truly international environment in our programs.

## English as spoken language

*During the educational activities*, English should be the language of use. This refers to all interactions assuming verbal communication: not only between the teaching staff and students, but also among students; and not only if the individuals participating in the communication are of different nationalities, but also if they have the same nationality.

The last principle may appear odd at first sight: why would you speak English in a group that consists of only native speakers of another language? Besides the obvious argument that this improves your grasp of the English language, another point, equally important, is known as the *option of listening in*: other students that may be interested in your conversation and might be inclined to contribute to it, can only do so if they are given the chance, which in turn means that they should be able to understand what is being said. This can only happen if the spoken language is English. The above is especially true in a laboratory session where a TA is helping students, discussing issues that neighboring groups may also be facing. This is why we advise students to follow this code in situations where it is sensible.

Moreover, quite importantly, please do not wait until another student *asks* you to switch to English. Having to ask is for this already creates barriers between students of different nationalities, and leads to exclusion.

## English as written language

Learning materials and other relevant texts should all be in English. Where you find that this principle is not upheld, you may in almost 100% of cases assume that this is an oversight, which will be put right as soon as it is pointed out to the respective lecturer, or to the programme management.

To make this explicit we refer to two cases where the consequences may be less obvious:

- You are expected to write test answers in English. Next to the fact that this requirement is stipulated in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) of all international programs, it also ensures that all students are treated in an equal and fair way. Allowing students to write answers in any other language than English, would be an unfair advantage for the native speakers of that language. Furthermore, this would assume that your assessor is able to *read* and understand that language, which is obviously something this university cannot guarantee.
- We recommend students to also use English in written (email) communication. Some of the emails you are sending are forwarded and copied, in many cases reaching readers for which English is the primary/sole language in the work place. If this is the case, you take the risk of not getting a satisfactory answer/solution for your question/problem.

### **Dutch cultural elements**

The matter of predominantly using English during education activities has an interesting dimension when analyzed from the perspective of the fact that this education takes place in the Netherlands, and the Dutch culture will inevitably have a significant impact on all of us. We do assume that international students coming to study here are interested in this cultural aspect as well, and are open to experience it first-hand. Therefore, adding a Dutch cultural context from time to time for purposes of illustration, or perspective, can enrich a lecture or course. In such situations, you may be faced with some Dutch source materials after all, which is an exception to the principle of English being the written language. If this is the case, you may expect a translation or explanation in English, and you may also expect that such excerpts are not part of your core teaching material without a complete translation of the original source.

### **Finally**

We are welcoming any constructive criticism on the code of conduct outlined above, as well as questions, additions and further clarifications.