

## **Guideline on Using Chinese as the Teaching Medium in H&SS Common Core Courses**

*[Approved by the Committee on Undergraduate Core Education on 18 June 2015]*

### **Senate Policy on the Medium of Instruction**

1. The Academic Regulation stipulates that “unless otherwise approved by the Senate for a specific course or program of study, English is the medium of instruction and assessment at the University.” (<http://publish.ust.hk/acadreg/ugreg/index.html>).
2. The Senate has delegated its authority (in June 1998 and April 2002) to the School of Humanities and Social Science (SHSS) to use Chinese language as the teaching medium in H&SS courses related to the area of Chinese studies; and Chinese reading materials may be included in H&SS courses that deal with Chinese subject matters. Extracts from the confirmed minutes of the 39<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Senate meetings held in June 1998 and April 2002 are presented in the Annex as reference.

### **CUCE Considerations in Establishing the Guideline**

3. During the review of common core courses, it was noted that an increasing number of HUMA courses were approved to be taught in Putonghua or Cantonese, and some to use Chinese reading materials. The Committee on Undergraduate Core Education (CUCE) was concerned that this would limit the provision of HUMA common core courses taught in English to meet the demand from students of non-Chinese backgrounds, mainly international or exchange students.
4. On the other hand, the CUCE also understood that in consideration of the subject content to be covered, Chinese needs to be used as the teaching medium in some of these courses. Besides, the SHSS undertakes to contribute to enhancing the Chinese proficiency for students; hence the School needs to ensure that there is adequate number of courses taught in Chinese to meet the demand.

### **CUCE Guideline on Using Chinese as the Teaching Medium in H&SS Common Core Courses**

5. While noting the University policy that English is the language of instruction in all formal instructional activities, and acknowledging that the SHSS was delegated the authority by the Senate to approve the use of Chinese as the teaching medium in H&SS courses related to Chinese studies, the CUCE adopts the following guideline to ensure a good provision of common core courses, particularly HUMA courses, that are taught in English for non-Chinese speaking students:
  - a) The SHSS will ensure that at least 70% of all HUMA common core courses as well as course places offered in each term are to be taught in English. The use of Chinese as the teaching medium will be considered only when the subject content makes this necessary.

- b) As regards school-sponsored courses (SSCs), the SHSS will also ensure that at least 70% of the SSC course places offered in the term are to be taught in English.
- c) When there are courses that must be delivered in Chinese, the SHSS will try its very best to offer courses of similar academic content in English whenever possible to meet the needs and demand of non-Chinese speaking students.
- d) The specific Chinese language to be used (Putonghua or Cantonese) should be indicated for each course.

6. Statistics on the number of courses, course places offered and student enrollment in H&SS common core courses taught in Chinese will be collected regularly and reported to the CUCE. The Undergraduate Core Education (UCE) Team, Academy of Interdisciplinary Studies\* will work with the SHSS closely to prepare the statistics.

*\* The office name was updated following the re-organization of the UCE Team from under the Academic Registry to the Center for Education Innovation (in November 2017), and subsequently to the Academy of Interdisciplinary Studies (in July 2021).*

Annex: Extracts from confirmed minutes of Senate meetings:

- (A) 39<sup>th</sup> meeting held in June 1998 (*paper ref: SN39/48/98*)
- (B) 60<sup>th</sup> meeting held in April 2002 (*paper ref: SN60/11/2002*)

**(A) Extracts from Confirmed Minutes of the 39th Senate Meeting held on 9 June 1998**

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**Proposal to Use Chinese Language as a Teaching Medium for HSS Courses  
(Paper SN39/48/98)**

*{Submitted by the School of Humanities and Social Science.}*

28. The paper, presented by the Dean of Humanities and Social Science (HSS), sought approval to use Chinese language as a teaching medium for HSS courses related to the area of Chinese studies. It was emphasized that:

- (a) the School of HSS does not have the intention to change the University's policy on instructional medium;
- (b) the School agrees that HKUST graduates must have a good command of both English and Chinese in order to compete successfully in their career and advanced study;
- (c) the proposal is intended mainly to enable students to cope more effectively with courses the contents of which are related to Chinese studies; and
- (d) an approving mechanism will be established in the School to ensure that all faculty requests for the use of Chinese in class are fully reviewed and justified.

Summarized comments made by the CPS/CUS members on this subject were distributed at the meeting for Members' reference.

29. It was moved and seconded that the proposal be approved. While there was clear support, discussions focused mainly on the implementation and consequences of change. It was agreed that:

- (a) for the benefit of English speaking students, Chinese courses in English should still be available;
- (b) given the approving mechanism as proposed, it should not be necessary to involve the CPS or CUS in the process;
- (c) the School of HSS should submit, for each semester, to the CUS/CPS and the Senate as well, a list of courses that adopt Chinese language as the teaching medium. This should also be specified in the Academic Calendar;
- (d) the CPS and CUS should review the policy after two years of operation and report back to the Senate.

30. The proposal was carried.

DHSS

**(B) Extracts from Confirmed Minutes of the 60th Senate Meeting held on 10 April 2002**

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**Review of the Policy Governing the Approval of H&SS Courses Using Chinese Language as the Medium of Teaching (Paper SN60/11/2002)**

*{Submitted jointly by the Committee on Undergraduate Studies (CUS) and the Committee on Postgraduate Studies (CPS).}*

7. At the 39th meeting held on 9 June 1998, the Senate had delegated authority to the School of Humanities and Social Science (H&SS) to approve H&SS courses that were related to the area of Chinese studies to use Chinese language as the medium of teaching. CUS and CPS had also been requested by the Senate to review the policy after two years of operation.

8. CUS and CPS had recently conducted a thorough review of the policy. Both Committees concluded that the current policy and procedures governing the approval of H&SS courses using Chinese language as the medium of teaching had been implemented smoothly. The two Committees hence jointly recommended the following to the Senate:

“To continue implementing the policy and procedures governing the approval of H&SS courses using Chinese language as the medium of teaching as are, that is, the School of H&SS be allowed to consider and approve courses at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels taught in Chinese and that the School make a report to CUS and CPS on an annual basis. CUS and CPS will further review the policy and procedures in Spring 2003-04 and report to the Senate.”

9. It was so moved and seconded.

10. Professor TING Pang-Hsin, Dean of H&SS, made the following points:

- (a) Non-Chinese speaking students in the University constituted a relatively small proportion (less than 1%) of the total student population. Among the course offerings in H&SS, 50% in Humanities and 100% in Social Science were taught in English and were viable choices to them. There would be little doubt that the curricular needs of the English speaking students were well protected.
- (b) Faculty members in H&SS were fully aware of the University’s policy of adopting English as the official medium of classroom instruction and the University’s goal to internationalise its student population through increasing the number of overseas students. The choice of the instructional language was always based upon the nature and emphasis of the instruction. The selection had never been an arbitrary decision or a decision based upon convenience.
- (c) The School had established a strict mechanism for approving each request for using Chinese as the teaching medium. Procedurally, it started with a full review by the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Committee and the Head at the Divisional level and also by the Dean in consultation with the senior academic management at the School’s Dean-Heads’ Meetings.

- (d) In view of the well-established and fully-qualified faculty team of the School of H&SS, the University should put faith in their judgement in selecting the right materials and teaching medium for individual courses.

To avoid unnecessary paper-work and possible damage to the morale of colleagues in the School of H&SS, Professor Ting proposed the following amendment to the original recommendation from CUS and CPS:

“To continue implementing the policy and procedures governing the approval of H&SS courses using Chinese language as the medium of teaching as are, that is, the School of H&SS be allowed to consider and approve courses at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels taught in Chinese and that the School make a report to the Senate on an annual basis.”

11. The amendment was moved and seconded.
12. Members expressed strong support of Professor Ting’s view amid appreciation of the achievements of his School, especially in China studies. Whilst there was no disagreement that the subjects of Chinese literature, Chinese history, Chinese philosophy etc. are best taught in Chinese, discussion focused on whether the School should submit its review report annually to CUS and CPS (which is the normal reporting relationship), or to the Senate direct.
13. Upon voting, the proposed amendment by Professor Ting was passed.
14. The amended motion was subsequently voted and carried.