

Procedures with regard to dealing with Irish medium telephone calls; written/ electronic correspondence and counter service queries at the University of Limerick

A Quality Statement

Under the general provisions of the Official Languages Act, (OLA) the University of Limerick has a legislative obligation to answer Irish medium queries on email or by regular mail in Irish. The University has made further commitments in its 2006-2009 and 2009-2012 Official Languages Schemes in targeted administrative departments by designating at least one person in these areas to deal with both oral and written Irish medium queries.

These procedures are being published for the attention of **all** University of Limerick personnel. They are of particular relevance to staff in areas targeted in the UL Official Languages Schemes 2006-2009 and 2009-2012

All members of the campus community are invited to use the desktop card and supporting sound files. The text and Mp3 files of the desktop phrases and other common standard Irish phrases in administration are available on the UL websites www.ul.ie/aonadnagaeilge and www.ul.ie/ola

1. General

- 1.1 All targeted areas will promote their commitment to providing services through the medium of both official languages in their promotional literature.
- 1.2 The names of members of staff designated to provide a service through the medium of Irish will be available on the department's website. Every member of staff in each of these targeted areas should be aware of these contact names and extension numbers.
- 1.3 All staff should reply courteously to customers (as per 2009-2012 Scheme definition of customers) who wish to conduct their business in Irish.
- 1.4 All Irish medium queries should be logged and reported to the UL OLA Implementation Group on a yearly basis.
- 1.5 The turn around time for a written Irish language reply should be the same as that for an English language reply
- 1.6 Learners of Irish will be encouraged to practice their Irish by greeting the caller bilingually when answering the telephone. (See useful phrases and supporting sound files)

2. Written Correspondence in Irish

- 2.1 Where standard letters exist in the targeted administrative areas, these should be translated to Irish.
- 2.2 Non standard replies should be outsourced to translators (see UL translation procedures at www.ul.ie/ola)
- 2.3 A standard template for an acknowledgement letter is available on the Corporate Secretary's website www.ul.ie/ola
- 2.4 English translations should be filed with Irish versions
- 2.5 Personal names and surnames do not need to be translated in email signatures/out-of-office replies

3. Telephone communication with the public

- 3.1 The University welcomes telephone communication in either Irish or English. Main Reception will answer each call bilingually by stating Ollscoil Luimnigh/University of Limerick.
- 3.2 If the customer gives their name in Irish every effort should be made to pronounce the name correctly. [Never ask what that is in English!]
- 3.3 If the customer gives their name in Irish and the UL person dealing with it has difficulty writing it or spelling it, they should ask the person to spell it. There should be no issue with inserting an accent (síneadh fada). See guidelines in appendix 1.
- 3.4 If a caller begins the call in Irish, the UL contact should respond in Irish. If it so happens that whoever answers the call cannot speak Irish, the standard response(s) on the attached desktop card should be used before transferring them to the designated person to deal with Irish medium queries for the area.
- 3.5 Where a call is taken by a bilingual individual, or if the call is transferred to that individual, he/she should make it evident that he or she is bilingual. The ensuing conversation will be in the caller's preferred language.
- 3.6 In a Division/Department which has bilingual members of staff who are unavailable at a given time to take an Irish medium query, the person who answers the phone should politely explain the situation to the caller and
 - (i) an arrangement should be made for a staff member with Irish to return the call, unless the caller is willing to discuss his/her business through the medium of English, or
 - (ii) if urgent the call should be transferred to Aonad na Gaeilge (extension 4754)
- 3.7 All greetings and instructions on answering machines in offices and divisions targeted in Scheme 2006-09 and Scheme 2009-12 will be bilingual. [Note personal names do not need to be translated into Irish].
- 3.8 A desktop card aid for answering the phone and supporting sound files have been created by Aonad na Gaeilge. (item 5 below]

4. Counter services

- 4.1 The division/department will display the UL symbol promoting bilingual services
- 4.2 The "designated person" will deal with Irish medium queries
- 4.3 If the "designated person" is unavailable the option to make an appointment with that person should be offered. See standard responses and other useful phrases on the desktop card/Mp3 resources.