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Context document: Revision of the *Language Policy* (2016) of Stellenbosch University

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1. Introduction: process and timeline

Paragraph 10 of the [Language Policy \(2016\)](#) of Stellenbosch University (SU) stipulates that the policy “lapses five years after the date of its implementation” and that it “must be reviewed during its fifth year of operation”. Considering this, the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) in October 2020 initiated a review process, convened a task team, and proposed a timeline for the review, based on the University Almanac for 2021.



Figure 1: Timeline for the revision of the Language Policy (2016) during 2021

When reviewing a policy or management document, the current version is always taken as the point of departure and tested against **changing circumstances** to determine whether a substantial revision (total replacement) is needed or whether incremental adaptations (small amendments) will suffice. This is done by studying the **implementation** of the policy and considering the extent to which the **principles and provisions** are still relevant and deliver on the intended **purpose and aims**.

Strengthened by the *Language Policy (2016)* having passed the **Constitutional Court** muster in 2019 (also discussed later in this document), the task team was requested to take the current policy as the point of departure, while taking the following into consideration: all national language policy and regulatory documentation; legal counsel’s opinion; input from faculty boards; the Rectorate, Institutional Forum, Senate and Council; comments received via the two public consultation processes; and any other relevant research, documentation or input obtained from further consultation and benchmarking. The task team also drew from the experiences and feedback related to language implementation since 2017, as well as faculty language reports, Language Day reports, staff and student surveys and demographic data.

Framed within the current **national policy context**, benchmarked against peer universities in South Africa and informed by the Stellenbosch University (SU) [Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024](#), this document aims to outline the pertinent issues in the higher education and Stellenbosch University contexts.

Further to the timeline and process: A first draft of the proposed revised *Language Policy* was consulted within the broader SU community, considered by the Rectorate, and released for public consultation from 20 March to 12 April 2021. The task team collated responses to the first draft and then reported to different institutional committees for consideration, discussion, and further input. The task team is formulating a second draft based on the feedback from the public consultation and the input from faculty boards, the Rectorate, Institutional Forum, Senate and Council. The second draft is to be released for public consultation before the end of July 2021, after which the task team will consider all the feedback and input for inclusion in the final draft. This third and final draft of the proposed revised *Language Policy (2016)* is to be tabled for discussion and recommendation by the relevant institutional committees and submitted to Council for possible approval with the concurrence of Senate and after consultation with the Institutional Forum according to Paragraph 9 of the Policy.

2. Higher Education Context

Since 2017 when the current policy was implemented, several trends continue to impact the higher education landscape on an international, national, and institutional level. Some of these, as they relate to language matters, are briefly discussed below:

2.1 International context

2.1.1 English academic literacies and individual multilingualism

Developing digital and **academic literacies** remain a challenge within higher education. Apart from improving students' reading, comprehension and academic writing skills in English, there is a tension to promote local (as well as immigrant) languages (and dialects) as well, not only for the personal and societal value that it promises to deliver, but to address the learning needs and individual and social realities of “emergent bilinguals” and “multilingual students” as, e.g., discussed in [The Research Trends of Multilingualism in Applied Linguistics and Education \(2000-2019\): A Bibliometric Analysis \(Lin & Lei, 2020\)](#). Increasingly, “**translanguaging**” as a pedagogical practice and a transdisciplinary theory is used to contemplate the development and value of societal and **individual multilingualism** within different educational settings.

2.1.2 Globalised, standardised and locally relevant curricula

The trend towards the globalisation, internationalisation and **Englishification** of higher education (including the promotion of international mobility and the harmonisation of qualification frameworks) continue; however, it has been met with some political resistance in recent years, e.g., with the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit). In South Africa, the *National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (2020)* calls for the “transformation of curricula to reflect the location of knowledge and curricula in the context of the African continent”. As such, universities are challenged to regularly consider the **graduate attributes** they wish to instil in their undergraduate students and to manage the tensions between competing demands, e.g., preparing graduates to become global citizens, yet remain rooted in their local communities (and appreciative of **indigenous knowledge systems**). In addition, certain professions may require (bi- or multilingual) language skills and/or multicultural competences, albeit to practice within a local, regional, continental, or international setting.

2.1.3 Face-to-face lectures and technologically mediated learning experiences

Although it is not clear what the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on higher education will be, it has disrupted traditional face-to-face teaching and encouraged an unprecedented shift to emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment (ERTLA) modalities. The wide-scale use of **learning technologies** by lecturers, students, schoolteachers, and learners alike, may herald in a new era of blended- and hybrid learning possibilities. These changing circumstances may require and/or enable more innovative and flexible approaches to language, how it is used in class, interpreted in real-time or translated into multiple languages as part of asynchronous learning activities. **New pedagogies** that make frequent use of podcasts, recorded lectures, simulated practical work, online tutorials,

peer-to-peer learning, and self-assessment could require new provisions to be stipulated in a revised policy.

2.2 National context

2.2.1 Language Policy Framework (2020) and the promotion of indigenous languages

In 2018, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) released a draft revised [Language Policy for Higher Education \(2017\)](#) for public comment. Its purpose was “to **promote parity of esteem** of indigenous official languages in the higher education system of South Africa.” In 2020, the finalized policy was promulgated as the [Language Policy Framework \(2020\) for Public Higher Education Institutions](#), with the purpose to, inter alia, “provide a framework for the **development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of scholarship, teaching and learning and communication** at South African public higher education institutions, in particular, universities”.

A notable difference between the two documents, is the definition of “indigenous languages” as they relate to South Africa. In the draft revised *Language Policy for Higher Education (2017)* the following distinctions are made:

Indigenous languages	An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region or country and spoken by indigenous people.
Indigenous South African languages	Indigenous official African languages of South Africa as referred to by the <i>Constitution of the Republic of South Africa</i> (i.e., Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu)
Official African Languages	The official African languages of South Africa (i.e., Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu)

However, in the promulgated *Language Policy Framework (2020)*, the definitions read as follows:

Indigenous languages	Languages that have their heritage roots in Africa (also referred to as African languages in literature and some policy documents) that belong to the Southern Bantu language family, where ‘Bantu’ is used purely as a linguistic term. An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region or country and spoken by indigenous people.
Official South African languages	This refers to the eleven official languages of South Africa as specified in the <i>Constitution of the Republic of South Africa</i> (i.e., Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu, and English).

This definition above is akin to the one used in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)’s *Report on the use of African Languages as mediums of instruction in Higher Education (2015)*:

Indigenous African languages	In this report the term ‘Indigenous African languages’ is used to refer to African languages of the Southern Bantu language family (where ‘Bantu’ is used purely as a linguistic term). In this context the term excludes Afrikaans.
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To be noted:

- Universities will have to “develop strategies, policies and implementation plans for promoting ... **at least two official languages**, other than the medium of instruction or

language of teaching and learning, for development for **scholarly discourse** as well as official communication.”¹

- The *Language Policy Framework* (2020) also seeks to address “[t]he role of higher education in promoting, and creating conditions for the development of ... **Khoi, Nama, San languages and Sign Language**”.
- To comply with the *Language Policy Framework* (2020), all institutions will have to review their policies, submit implementation plans and **report annually** on the progress monitored. The implementation date of the *Language Policy Framework* (2020) is 1 January 2022.
- The DHET plans to “implement a funding model” and provide institutions with “evaluation criteria [and] ... implementation guidelines” soon.

2.2.2 SU’s stance on Afrikaans as indigenous language

In its comprehensive feedback on the DHET’s draft revised *Language Policy for Higher Education* (2017) in 2018 Stellenbosch University indicated that it strongly supported the point of view that Afrikaans is an indigenous South African language. Universities were not given an opportunity to comment on the final version of the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* published in November 2020. SU also brought the matter to the attention of Universities South Africa (USAf). As SU has not heard of or received notice that other universities have considered the practical and cost implications of the new framework, SU assumes that few universities probably have had the opportunity to do so.

Stellenbosch University remains committed to Afrikaans as indigenous language as part of inclusive multilingualism. At its meeting of 21 June 2021 Council accepted the following motion on indigenous languages: “SU has taken note with concern the Department of Higher Education and Training’s classification in the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* (2020). SU supports the view that Afrikaans and the Khoe and San languages are indigenous languages. Council requests SU’s management to take appropriate steps to engage with the DHET to address this issue.”

2.2.3 Benchmarking with other South African universities

At the end of 2020, the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) requested language- and policy-related information from all South African universities for benchmarking purposes. Nine (9) universities responded by January 2021, with sixteen (16) responses still pending. One (1) university indicated that it is still drafting its first language policy and therefore submitted no substantial feedback.

a. *Multilingualism supported in principle, yet only English offered in practice*

An initial reading of eight (8) university responses and their language policies shows unanimous support for the value of multilingualism or “**functional multilingualism**” (where language choices are determined by the situation or context in which it is used). However, despite the universities’ commitment to the promotion of at least two additional official languages, **English in all cases remains the primary medium of instruction**. E.g., the *Language policy of the Central University of Technology, Free State* (2015) states that the university

¹ “Official languages” here includes Afrikaans and English; however, since both languages are used as a *medium of instruction*, the interpretation of this prescription may have to be checked with the DHET to ensure that SU adheres to this prescription by the promotion of isiXhosa and Afrikaans, as well as South African Sign Language (which is not listed in the definition as an “official South African language”).

“will, wherever possible, promote indigenous languages in teaching and learning, within the context of individual consultation” (i.e., not within lectures) and only “English will be used as the academic language in all teaching and learning endeavours..., including facilitation, assessment, study guides, curricula, syllabi, class notes, research, scholarly work, publications and consultation hours”.

To be noted, quoting from their respective policy documents, is the:

- University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), which aims to be a **fully bilingual** university and to “achieve for isiZulu the institutional and academic status of English”.
- North-West University (NWU), which “**without the diminishment of the use of English and Afrikaans**” aims to promote Setswana and Sesotho “as languages of communication and teaching and learning” across different faculties, campuses and modules.
- University of South Africa (UNISA), which as a distance-learning institution currently offers study material and assessments in English only, but aims “to attain the **staff capacity to use all [eleven] official languages**” and support students with multilingual glossaries.

b. Institutional commitment to the promotion of two official/indigenous languages

As is the case with the *SU Language Policy (2016)*, most language policies provide a short motivation for the official/indigenous languages they intend to promote. A short rationale is provided for each choice and seems to correlate with their undergraduate students’ home language distribution. Although some universities are quite aspirational when it comes to the development of these languages, there seems to be a pragmatic focus on developing and strengthening the marginalized languages as languages of communication only, rather than of scholarship or teaching and learning at this stage. (However, it should also be noted that all universities will have to revise their language policies soon, as mandated by the DHET.)

The availability of **South African Sign Language** and interpreting services are mentioned within some policy documents, but mostly in the context of providing support to students with universal access needs.

3. Stellenbosch University Context

3.1 Constitutional Court Judgement

Soon after the *Language Policy (2016)* was adopted by Stellenbosch University, *Gelyke Kanse*, a voluntary association seeking to promote Afrikaans mother-tongue education, approached the High Court seeking an order to set the *Language Policy (2016)* aside and reinstate the preceding 2014 version of the *Language Policy*. However, the High Court dismissed the application, which found the *Language Policy* of 2014 not to be equitable as it denied black students not conversant in Afrikaans full access to the University. In contrast, the High Court found the *Language Policy (2016)* to be consistent with the [Higher Education Act \(1997\)](#) and the [Language Policy for Higher Education 2002](#) in terms of “ensuring equitable access” and being “reasonably practicable”.

After the dismissal, the applicants approached the Constitutional Court for direct leave to appeal. However, in a unanimous judgement, the Constitutional Court dismissed the application for leave to appeal and found that the *Language Policy* (2016) was constitutionally justified. The Constitutional Court further found that the University's process in adopting the *Language Policy* (2016) was "thorough, exhaustive, inclusive and properly deliberative," as quoted from the *Constitutional Court Judgement Media Summary* (2019). "The University's determinative motivation for introducing the new policy was to facilitate equitable access to its campus, its teaching and learning opportunities by black students not conversant in Afrikaans".

Still quoting from the *Constitutional Court Judgement Media Summary* (2019): "The Court noted that the flood-tide of English predominance risks jeopardising South Africa's entire indigenous linguistic heritage. This is because the march of history in South Africa and globally seems relentlessly hostile to minority languages, including Afrikaans, which is the mother-tongue of some seven million on a planet inhabited by seven billion people. But this could not be made the University's burden."

A similar judgement was made in the case of *AfriForum v Free State University* in favour of the *University of the Free State Language Policy* (2015), which did away with its Afrikaans lecture offering, with English "as the primary medium of instruction at undergraduate and postgraduate level on all three campuses" and "[m]ultilingualism ... supported among other activities by an expanded tutorial system specially designed for first-year students ... [taking] place in English, Afrikaans and Sesotho in the same class on the Bloemfontein Campus and in English, Sesotho and isiZulu on the Qwaqwa Campus".

3.2 Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024

Since the *Language Policy* (2016) implementation in 2017, SU has replaced its [Institutional Intent and Strategy 2013-2018](#) with the [Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024](#). The [Statute of Stellenbosch University \(2019\)](#) which has also since been updated, assigns Council to, with "the concurrence of the Senate, determine the language policy of the University".

3.3 Demographic information on staff and student language profiles

In preparation for the revision of the *Language Policy* (2016), the SU Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement conducted an online [staff language proficiency survey](#) (with a response rate of 27.8%, n=1,261) in December 2020 and January 2021 to get more insight into the current distribution of home languages amongst staff members at SU and the self-perceived language proficiency of academic staff (n=588) in terms of presenting undergraduate classes, preparing learning materials and grading assessments in different languages. In addition, the SU Division for Information Governance compiled a statistical report on the [language profile of students](#) enrolled at SU between 2017 and 2021.

Some findings from the survey and report are briefly discussed below, with some sections quoted verbatim from the respective source documents:

a. Staff home language and general proficiency in speaking, reading and writing

A question from the staff survey asked staff to indicate the language(s) they regard as their home language, and multiple options could be selected². From the feedback (n=1,190), it is

² Which means that the total percentages add up to >100% and in this particular instance to 117,5%.

evident that most staff who responded to this question **identify Afrikaans as (one of) their Home Language(s) (63.4%)**, with 43% of staff identifying English. Except for Tshivenda, all official South African languages are regarded by some staff as (one of) their home language(s). However, except for isiXhosa at 3.4% and isiZulu at 1,2% the remainder of the official South African languages rate between 0.3% and 0.6% each. The option was also provided to select “Other (International)” language(s) as a home language, which received 3.8%. (These international languages include Dutch, Flemish, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Shona, Tamil and Yoruba.)

In three other questions, staff (n=1,163) were asked to indicate in which of the South African languages they are proficient in speaking, reading, and writing. Their answers focussing on English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa were as follows: 98.5% indicate language proficiency when *speaking* English, 85.6% Afrikaans and 8.4% isiXhosa. For *reading*, the percentages are: 98.5% for English, 87% Afrikaans and 5% isiXhosa, and for *writing*: 98.8% English, 77.3% Afrikaans and 4.1% isiXhosa.

b. Language proficiency of academic staff in terms of teaching, learning and assessment

Respondents who indicated that they teach undergraduate programmes/modules were required to answer additional questions relating to their self-perceived language proficiency in (i) presenting, (ii) preparing study material and (iii) preparing and grading assessment for undergraduate programmes/modules.

- (i) Nearly all surveyed teaching staff (n=558) indicate that they are comfortable presenting undergraduate classes in English (97,3%), while 58.4% indicate they are comfortable presenting in Afrikaans and 0.7% in isiXhosa.
- (ii) Similar percentages are indicated for the preparation of learning materials, with 98.2% comfortable in doing so in English, 54.7% in Afrikaans and 1.1% in isiXhosa.
- (iii) The distribution for assessments was 98.7% in English, 62.1% in Afrikaans and 0.9% isiXhosa.

The self-perceived language proficiency of academic staff (n=467) providing postgraduate supervision is as follows: 98.1% is comfortable supervising in English, 50,7% in Afrikaans and 1.1% in isiXhosa.

c. Home language distribution of undergraduate students

When the 2021 undergraduate distribution of students' home language is compared to 2017, both English and other official South African languages increased by two percentage points, whereas Afrikaans decreased by five percentage points. The 2021 distribution is as follows: 48,7% (47.8% in 2017) identify English as their home language; 37,4% (42.4% in 2017) Afrikaans and 6,8% (4.9% in 2017) other official South African languages, with the remaining 7.1% (4.9% in 2017) identifying an international language as their home language.

d. Students' preferred language of teaching and learning

English as the preferred language of teaching and learning for undergraduate students increased from 68.2% in 2017 to 80.8% in 2021. In 2021, nearly 100% of undergraduates with a home language other than Afrikaans, as well as 49.5% of undergraduates with Afrikaans as home language, preferred English as their language of teaching and learning.

In 2021, almost 100% of black African and Indian/Asian undergraduates preferred English as language of teaching and learning, as well as 80.7% of coloured and 73.8% of white undergraduates.

In 2017, approximately a quarter of undergraduates and newcomer first-years with Afrikaans as home language preferred English as language of teaching and learning. By 2021, this proportion had increased to nearly half in both instances, namely 49.5% for undergraduates and 46.1% for newcomer first-years.

This year (2021) the faculties of AgriSciences, Education and Theology have the highest percentage of students who prefer Afrikaans as language of teaching and learning: between 35% and 39%. Altogether 26.2% of undergraduates in the Faculty of Engineering prefer Afrikaans. In each of the remaining faculties, less than 20% of undergraduates prefer Afrikaans as language of teaching and learning.

e. Afrikaans and English as Grade 12 subject (home- or first additional language)

In 2021 nearly all newcomer first-years had English as a Grade 12 subject – 59.7% of them at Home Language level, very similar to 59.4% in 2017. A total of 85.8% of newcomer first-years had Afrikaans as a Grade 12 subject – 34.7% of them at Home Language level. Some two thirds of black African students did not have Afrikaans as a Grade 12 subject.

In 2017, 12.3% of newcomer first-years did not have Afrikaans as a Grade 12 subject; by 2021, this figure had increased to 14.2%. Only 34.7% of newcomer first-years of 2021 studied Afrikaans at Home Language level in Grade 12, compared to 36.4% in 2017.

f. Distribution of Afrikaans home language students across universities

According to the 2019 Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) data: 20 508 Afrikaans home language undergraduate students, study at North West University. SU has the second-highest number: 7 892 students, followed by the University of the Free State with 4 349 Afrikaans home language students enrolled in undergraduate programmes.

3.4 Implementation, monitoring and reporting

The annual revision of language implementation plans reported to Senate by faculties, and to the Rectorate by professional academic support services (PASS), have become standard practice at SU. Language implementation plans are tabled at the Language Planning and Management Committee before it is reported on by the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) to Senate, submitted to Senate via the Faculty Board reports and submitted via the Language Committee of Council to Council.

In the Council meetings preceding the approval of the *Language Policy* (2016), the Council tabled a variety of language-related motions and amendments and even scheduled a special meeting to discuss the then draft policy. The draft version of the *Language Policy* (2016) was also submitted to the Social and Business Ethics Committee to consider ethical aspects, before Council adopted it in June 2016. However, since the *Language Policy* (2016)'s approval, the Council meeting extracts on language matters, show that Language Committee reports are noted and adopted – and sometimes queried, with special interest taken in Language Day reports and survey questions and findings.

3.4.1 Language Day and Student and Staff satisfaction language surveys

As an initiative by the Language Planning and Management Committee, supported by the Language Centre, two Language Days were held, one in 2015 and another in 2018. In 2015, there were some policy-related concerns about the “T-option” of the previous Language Policy (2014) and the implementation of interpretation services; however, in 2018, the Language Day discussions confirmed the University’s commitment to creating enabling multilingualism environments at the institutional, faculty, departmental and individual level, with no concerns raised about the *Language Policy* (2016) or its implementation.

Two undergraduate student surveys were conducted in 2017 and a student and staff survey in 2019. The surveys show prominent levels of student satisfaction with the implementation of the current *Language Policy* (2016), including the percentage of lectures available in students’ language of preference. The staff survey shows similar levels of satisfaction. Interestingly, in the co-curriculum (out-of-class, residence and campus activities), students prefer bilingual approaches, i.e., Afrikaans and English, to be used, instead of a single language or multilingual approach.

3.4.2 Language implementation plans and reports (faculties and PASS)

According to paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2 of the *Language Policy* (2016), the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching prepares an annual report to Senate and Council, considering the *Language implementation reports* of the faculties and the responsibility centres. These reports are discussed annually at the Language Planning and Management Committee meetings to advise the Vice-Rector: Teaching and Learning.

Regarding *language planning*, Clause 7.4.3 of the *Language Policy* (2016) states the following:

“Every faculty reviews its use of language for learning and teaching and records the language arrangements in its Faculty Language Implementation Plan annually, at the least. This Plan is reported to Senate via the faculty board and Senate’s Academic Planning Committee. Senate has the power either to accept the faculty’s Language Implementation Plan or to refer it back to the faculty. Once accepted, the language arrangements for learning and teaching of a particular module are published in the relevant module frameworks.”

It should also be noted that according to a Senate decision of 5 June 2020 (adoption of the Academic Planning Committee report of 20 April 2020), faculties were allowed – during the introduction of emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment (ERTLA), because of the great urgency and workload to pivot all learning and teaching to an online environment – to deviate from the provision in the Language Policy (*cf.* 7.1.7.2) that states that compulsory reading material (excluding published material) is also provided in Afrikaans where reasonably practicable.

The exact wording of the Senate decision of 5 June 2020 is as follows:

That the practical reality of the time constraints regarding provision of learning material like podcasts in both English and Afrikaans (namely that all material cannot be translated timeously in Afrikaans) be accepted, and that new material may be offered in English only. (Note should be taken, however, of the Language Centre’s translators being available and ready to translate English podcasts into Afrikaans.)

An analysis of the Language Implementation Plans of Faculty and PASS environments from 2017 to 2020 point to the following **positive trends**:

- a. The annual reporting and planning for Language Implementation through formalised mechanisms as specified in the current Language Policy are becoming increasingly **effective**, because it not only ensures that faculties and professional academic support service (PASS) environments adhere to the formal provisions of the *Language Policy (2016)*, but with the introduction of a template it also allows environments to reflect on the consultation process followed and include how they promote multilingualism in their respective faculties. The Language Planning and Management Committee's feedback on these reports and plans further stimulate discussions within the respective environments. This has resulted in a shift from 2017 to 2021 in the conversation from a "language rights" to a "language justice" discourse.
- b. It appears as if the students and staff are overall "happy" with the implementation of the *Language Policy (2016)* and that the provisions and monitoring practices are becoming more **embedded** in faculties and general operational activities.
- c. The faculties and PASS environments have reached a level of **maturity** over time in the implementation of the Language Policy and there are many examples of good practice and creative and original techniques to promote multilingualism in the faculty reports, e.g., the use of dual medium tutorials, translanguaging projects, interpreting some foundational modules to isiXhosa, Mobilex, etc.
- d. The faculties and PASS environments' **continuous reflection** on how to implement the Language Policy within their specific contexts, has deepened over time.
- e. The **consultation** within faculties and PASS environments has broadened to include more role-players when compiling the reports and implementation plans.
- f. Faculties report **fewer deviations** and where there were minor deviations, valid explanations are provided for these deviations. This of course excludes the institutional deviation from Language implementation plans that was approved by Senate in 2020 for the second semester as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and ERTLA.
- g. Student-related **issues are dealt with more swiftly** and efficiently and in accordance with the *Language Policy (2016)* specifications.
- h. The **language survey results** are increasingly used to improve language implementation practices at faculty level.
- i. There are **more discussions between faculties** about modules shared between faculties when language changes are considered in the compilation of their Language Implementation Plans.
- j. The motivations provided for proposed changes from, e.g., dual to single medium are more **carefully motivated** according to the *Language Policy (2016)* provisions.
- k. The required PASS reports on implementation have led to a renewed focus on how environments **engage with their clients and stakeholders in a multilingual context**. Recommendations such as creating a multilingual environment in meetings and the redesign of the SU website are direct results of these reports. Multilingual meetings could greatly enhance the quality of discussions and decision-making, allowing participants to communicate in their first additional or home language, provided interpretation services are available. Although the interpretation of discussion could lengthen meetings, there is evidence that people can express their opinions more clearly in their first or home language, especially when dealing with more abstract and complex issues. Therefore, staff members should be **encouraged to use multiple languages at meetings**, where applicable.

- i. The **shift to online learning** prompted by Covid-19 has unlocked new possibilities and opportunities for multilingualism that should be investigated and harnessed. Fully translated podcasts in some modules is one such great advantage for students and a valuable resource for promoting multilingualism. Podcasts also provide opportunities for **additive bilingualism**, as students can go through the podcast again in their own time and make sure that they know the terminology.

The following **concerns** are raised in the reports by the faculties:

- a. Accurate and correct translations of assessments, core notes and PowerPoint presentations. The faculties can use their Language Implementation funds allocated to the faculties annually.
- b. Fewer students are comfortable tutoring in Afrikaans (2017 report, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences).
- c. Fewer lecturers can lecture and mark assessments in both English and Afrikaans.
- d. Many students whose home language is not English, nonetheless choose the English lecture stream when offered in parallel. Faculties are making a conscious effort to support Afrikaans students by means of tutorials, podcasts and other opportunities. In some instances, additional support is provided in isiXhosa as well.
- e. The language options of professional bodies (e.g. SAICA) impact language usage at university level.
- f. Funding remains a concern for faculties, although funding is provided annually to faculties and there does appear to be some underspending
- g. Although the *Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)* has "Postgraduate" in its qualification title, it is actually offered at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 7, which is typically regarded as the exit-level for an undergraduate degree programme. (The PGCE is registered against the *Advanced Diploma* qualification type, but is an approved exception to the nomenclature used in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework). For the PGCE it was decided to present it as a single medium programme, i.e. to view it as a postgraduate programme, as its name would suggest.
- h. The Language Committee's interpretation of clauses 7.1.8 and 7.1.9 of the Language Policy and the interpretation of the Faculties of Engineering and Law do not align. According to the Language Committee of Council 7.1.8, "*Question papers for tests, examinations and other summative assessments in undergraduate modules are available in Afrikaans and English. Students may answer all assessments and submit all written work in Afrikaans or English*", supersedes 7.1.9, "*In postgraduate learning and teaching, including final year modules at NQF level 8, any language may be used provided all the relevant students are sufficiently proficient in that language.*" The Language committee argues that 7.1.9 has no reference to assessments. Therefore, 7.1.8 applies to assessments, which should be made available in Afrikaans and English irrespective of the undergraduate module's NQF level and the language used in the specific module. However, the Law and Engineering faculties feel that 7.1.9 has an implicit reference to assessments. Only 7.1.9 should apply and the obligation should not be on the faculties to supply assessments in both Afrikaans and English for NQF level 8 modules. These two clauses of the Language Policy therefore require attention to clear up any future misunderstandings.
- i. The uptake of interpreting services has declined over the past four years and concerns were raised by the Faculties of Education, and Medicine and Health Sciences about its effectiveness and this was also confirmed by the general uptake

of interpreting in all faculties. Since ERTLA started in April 2020, the interpreters have been engaged in making podcasts (also referred to as “dubbing” of lectures) which as mentioned above has many advantages for promoting multilingualism.

Faculties also have to specify in their Language Implementation reports which of the three language options will be employed in the subsequent year for their undergraduate modules. The Division for Information Governance prepares an overview for the SU undergraduate offering annually.

As can be seen from Figure 2 below there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of parallel medium and single medium options, and a slight increase in the dual medium option since the implementation of the Language policy in 2017.

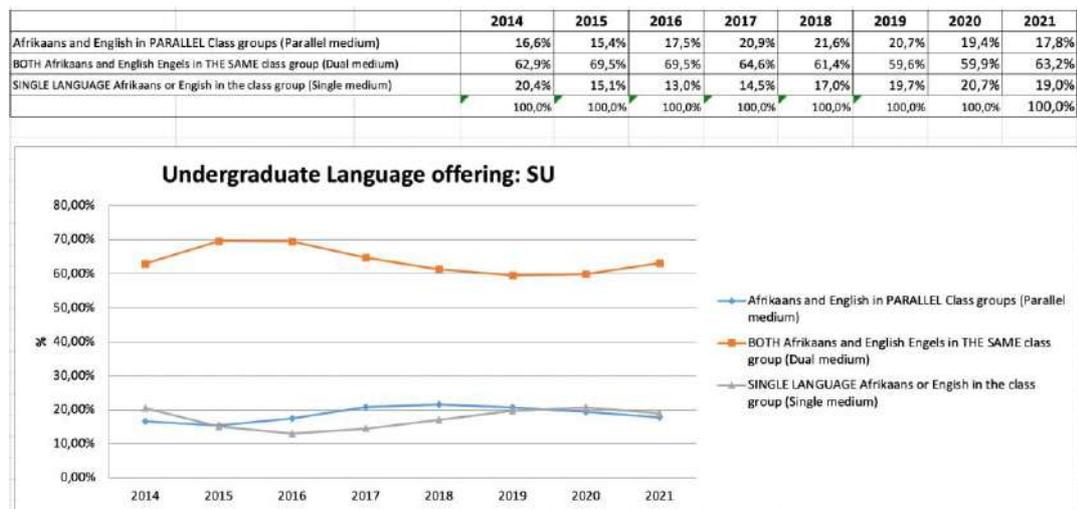


Figure 2: Undergraduate language offering at Stellenbosch University (table and visual representation)

3.5 Implementation costs of Language Policy

3.5.1 Cost of implementing the current multilingual Language Policy (2016) in 2021

The 2021 budget for the implementation of the current Language Policy (Figure 3) includes institutional annual awards to faculties and professional administrative services for PMT, translation and editing; institutional annual awards for interpretation services (simultaneous, sign language and equipment); and the institutional annual contribution to the Language Centre. Implicit staff-related costs have not been not included in Figure 3, but are indicated below the figure.

Implementing current Language Policy (2016) in 2021

Award to Faculties for PMT and Translation	R22 331 219
Award to Professional and Administration Services for Translation and Editing	R2 464 797
Award for Interpretation Services	R6 872 570
Award for Sign Language Services	R807 000
Award for Interpretation Equipment	R -
Institutional Contribution for Language Centre	R12 430 705
Grand Total	R44 906 291

Implicit cost of **administrative** and **academic** staff = **R90 million per year**

- **R4 452** per student or **8.9%** of the average undergraduate student's fees (\pm R50 000 / year).

Implicit cost of **academic** staff remunerated from the main budget (**R52 million per year**)

- **R2 572** per student or **5.1%** of the average undergraduate student's fees (\pm R50 000 / year).

Figure 3: Budget for implementing the current Language Policy (2016) in 2021

3.5.2 Feasibility to move to PMT for all undergraduate modules

When considering going full Parallel-Medium Teaching (PMT) for all undergraduate modules (face-to-face and technology-mediated), the costs to implement the current Language Policy (total of **R44,9 million**), the additional infrastructure and staff costs to offer PMT, the implicit staff costs, as well as the potential impact on student fees, have been taken into account (Figure 4).

Cost of full parallel-medium teaching (face-to-face & technology-mediated)

Ongoing Cost (F2f)	Per Year	Per Student	% Increase in Student Fees
Infrastructure Bond Repayments (20 year period)	R60 102 861	R3 568	7.1%
Infrastructure Lifecycle Costs (opportunity and maintenance costs)	R9 417 125	R559	1.1%
Additional PMT Staff Cost	R96 838 954	R5 749	11.5%
Implicit Staff Costs			
Support and Academic Staff (all budgets)	R 89 855 777	R5 334	10.7%
Academic Staff (only main budget)	R52 460 741	R3 114	6.2%
Total F2f (implicit cost of all staff scenario)	R256 214 716	R15 210	30.4%
Total (implicit cost of academic, main budget staff scenario)	R218 819 680	R12 990	26.0%
Ongoing Cost (Technology-enhanced)		R8 160	16.3%

Figure 4: Costs of full parallel-medium teaching (PMT) in all undergraduate modules

In addition to the cost implications, the lack of suitable physical space for the needed additional lecture venues and parking, the potential impact of traffic on and around the central campus, SU's carbon

footprint, zoning regulations and statutory requirements, as well as staff capacity are some of the major challenges related to the implementation of full parallel-medium teaching.

Other considerations that add to the complexity have not been quantified. These include the intricacies of lecture scheduling and the reality that the number of students attending the Afrikaans stream of the PMT offering and the number of lecturers able to teach and assess in Afrikaans are declining.

The staff language proficiency survey of December 2020/January 2021 indicated that 58.4% of teaching staff are comfortable with presenting classes in Afrikaans; 54.7% with preparing learning materials in Afrikaans; and 62.1% with assessments in Afrikaans. In comparison, 97.3% of academic staff are comfortable teaching in English; 98.2% with preparing learning materials in English; and 98.7% with assessments in English.

English as the preferred language of teaching and learning for undergraduate students increased from 68.2% in 2017 to 80.8% in 2021. In 2021, nearly 100% of undergraduates with a home language other than Afrikaans, as well as 49.5% of undergraduates with Afrikaans as home language, preferred English as their language of teaching and learning. In 2017, approximately a quarter of undergraduates and newcomer first-years with Afrikaans as home language preferred English as language of teaching and learning. By 2021, this proportion had increased to nearly half in both instances: 49.5% for undergraduates and 46.1% for newcomer first-years.

There are also grave concerns with regard to the **pedagogical soundness of this asynchronous PMT option** that require serious consideration. Dubbed lectures are accessed sometime after the lecture by one (language) group of students without the benefit of real-time collaboration with the lecturer and fellow students vis-à-vis the synchronous PMT option, where both (language) groups of students have the benefit of real-time collaboration with the lecturer and fellow students. The value of the dubbed lecture per se, in terms of its value for revision and reinforcement of learning material is not questioned, but rather whether this is an equitable solution if both language groups do not have the benefit of the collaborative interaction during a lecture between students and the lecturer.

4. Rectorate's perspective on multilingualism and SU Language Policy

As a committee or management structure the Rectorate is not responsible for the revision of the SU Language Policy, but it is obligated to provide input as part of the internal consultation. The Rectorate's perspective is therefore presented for consideration by the various internal groups and institutional committees involved in the revision process leading up to the consideration of the revised policy by Senate and Council. Individual members of the Rectorate also participate in the revision process in various institutional structures.

The [Rectorate's perspective on multilingualism and the SU Language Policy \(2016\)](#) submitted to Council in June 2021 focuses on the four scenarios that emerged from the first public participation phase of the Language Policy revision in March/April this year:

- Full face-to-face Parallel Medium Teaching (PMT);
- Full technology-mediated PMT;
- Single medium English teaching; and
- Single-medium Afrikaans teaching.

Given financial constraints, the declining demand for Afrikaans lectures, the language proficiency of academic staff and the potential negative impact of PMT on inclusiveness, the Rectorate is of the view

that the substantial capital investment, additional annual maintenance costs and additional staff costs required to implement full PMT (face-to-face) would be unjustifiable. The Rectorate also does not support full PMT (technology-mediated) as it is not regarded as an equitable and pedagogically sound solution. Both language groups cannot benefit from lectures as an interactive learning opportunity among students, nor between students and lecturers. As the two single-medium (English or Afrikaans) options do not align with SU's Vision 2040, its strategic themes or its objectives related to multilingualism, the Rectorate does not support these scenarios.

Stellenbosch University's commitment to multilingualism aligns with and supports the institution's core strategic themes and Vision 2040. By implementing its *Language Policy* (2016), SU has created opportunities for advancing multilingualism in academic and social spaces to increase equitable access to a university education, to foster an inclusive campus culture, and to support student success. This commitment to multilingualism includes all languages, with a focus on the three predominant languages of the Western Cape: Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. This is not merely a pragmatic step to accommodate multiple languages. It is about giving people a voice, regardless of the language they use. It speaks to our diversity as a country and allows us to connect in ways we otherwise would not be able to do. Through exposure to multilingualism and respect for each other's cultural heritage and language in our daily interactions on SU campuses, our students develop graduate attributes that mould them into engaged citizens with the skills and attitudes to co-create cohesive and tolerant communities in a diverse society.

5. Documents referenced in context document

Introduction

- [Language Policy \(2016\)](#)

Higher Education Context

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

- [Lin, Z & Lei, L. \(2020\). The Research Trends of Multilingualism in Applied Linguistics and Education \(2000-2019\): A Bibliometric Analysis](#)

NATIONAL CONTEXT

- [National Language Policy Framework \(2020\) for Public Higher Education Institutions](#)
- [Language Policy for Higher Education \(2017\)](#)
- [Higher Education Act 1997](#)

Stellenbosch University Context

- [SU Statute 2019](#)
- [Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024](#)
- [Institutional Intent and Strategy 2013-2018](#)
- [SU staff language proficiency report](#)
- [SU student language profile report](#)
- [Costing of three Language Policy scenarios](#)
- [Preliminary opinion for SU about the legality of proposed 2021 Language Policy](#)
- [Rectorate's perspective on multilingualism and the SU Language Policy](#)