Language Policy
of Stellenbosch University

Reference number of this document	
HEMIS classification	
Purpose	To formulate a policy on the governance and management (including the development, approval, operation, implementation, publication and revision) of language planning and language management at Stellenbosch University
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Date/frequency of revision	Every five years – or sooner, depending on compelling interim amendments
Previous revisions	This is the first revision of the Policy after implementation in 2002
Owner of this Policy	Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching)
Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for this Policy	Senior Director: Learning and Teaching Enhancement
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Approved by	Stellenbosch University Council
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> **The essence of the Policy**
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> **At Stellenbosch University, language is used in a way that is oriented towards engagement with knowledge in a diverse society. The University is committed to the use and sustained development of Afrikaans as an academic language in a multilingual context, while increasing the teaching offering in English to enable optimal learning and teaching for all South Africans at this University. The University also accepts responsibility for the judicious advancement of isiXhosa, where feasible, as an academic language and a language of social engagement.**
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> **By means of its Language Policy and Language Plan the University is committed to the advancement of multilingualism on both the institutional and the individual level. This Policy and Plan acknowledge language diversity and promote accessibility for staff and students, and develop the inherent value of multilingualism. The application of multilingual learning and teaching is effected in a pragmatic way and by means of a variety of support mechanisms.**

1. Introduction

One aspect of the diversity of our society is the variety of languages that we use. The Constitution grants official status to eleven different languages and regards all these languages as assets that should be used as a means of developing the human potential of our country. This important personal, professional and social asset should therefore be exploited collectively – also by the South African tertiary education sector.

These objectives are reaffirmed in the National Development Plan 2030, which clearly articulates the importance of multilingualism, the sustained development of the languages in our country and the necessity of developing people's skills in more than one language.

The core function of Stellenbosch University (SU) within the abovementioned context is engagement with knowledge. The knowledge spectrum of the University is limited in the sense that a number of focus areas comprise its core; the spectrum is extensive in the sense that it covers a variety of academic disciplines and entails both undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching, as well as research. In this engagement with knowledge, the University takes account of the diversity in society, especially regarding our linguistic diversity, and the intellectual wealth inherent therein.

The University further believes that the international context is essential to the acquisition and application of knowledge. At the same time, the SU takes account of the local socio-cultural context in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape region. The University strives for local application of the knowledge created in international context, inter alia, with due allowance for the diversity of the regional and national community.

2. The multilingual context

Against this background, the University contributes to multilingualism in such a way that Afrikaans can be used and advanced, while utilising the value of English as an international academic language and a common language for the many speakers of

other native South African languages. Furthermore, SU devotes attention to the judicious advancement and application of isiXhosa as an academic language and as a language of social engagement. The University therefore follows a dynamic process to make the institution more inclusive and diverse, also through our language offering. Through its multilingual approach SU advances institutional multilingualism (the use of more than one language by the institution) and individual multilingualism (the use of more than one language by die individual). The University's commitment to Afrikaans as an academic language therefore does not exclude the use of various languages at the University in the acquisition and application of knowledge: apart from the specific focus on Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa, languages such as Dutch, German and French are also utilised.

Afrikaans

The Afrikaans language community is *demographically* – regarding both the number of its users and their regional and national geographical distribution – one of the strongest language communities in the country. *Culturally* Afrikaans is a standard language that has functioned as an academic language for decades and that is a national asset, being a fully developed cultural language.

The University is committed to the uitilisation and advancement of the academic potential of Afrikaans as a means of empowering a large and diverse community. This includes a significant group from educationally disadvantaged communities.

English

The University makes use of English in its execution of the University's knowledge function because of the international value and local function of English as language of access.

IsiXhosa

IsiXhosa is an official language used by one of our largest language communities, spread over a large area of South Africa and on the increase in the Western Cape, among other regions. By means of specific initiatives the University undertakes to contribute to the advancement of isiXhosa as a developing academic language in addition to the advancement of isiXhosa as a language of communication.

3.   Application of the Policy

The Language Policy applies to all faculties, support services divisions, management bodies, staff and students of the University. The scope of application of the Policy is set out in more detail in the Language Plan of Stellenbosch University.

4.   Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the Language Policy (together with the Language Plan) is to govern language planning and language management at the University.

5. Aims of the Policy

a)   To comply with the University's Vision 2030 by means of a balanced multilingual offering, as contained in SU's Institutional Intent and Strategy, and to advance *inclusivity* in particular.

b)   To facilitate effective learning and teaching and service delivery at SU.

c)   To be used in conjunction with the Language Plan to guide those responsible for the development and revision of language implementation.

6. Policy principles

The University's Language Policy is to be executed with due observance of the following important principles:

1.   The University is a centre of excellence with a focus to generate knowledge through research, learning and teaching.

2.   The University acknowledges and respects the core values enshrined in the South African Constitution.

3.   The University takes account of strategic national policies and policy-making processes.

4.   The Language Policy takes account of the values and points of departure described in the University's Institutional Intent and Strategy.

5.   The University acknowledges the particular status of Afrikaans as an academic language and accepts the responsibility to advance Afrikaans as an academic language.

6.   The University acknowledges the status of English as an important local language as well as an acknowledged international academic language.

7.   The University acknowledges the status of isiXhosa as an important local language as well as a developing academic language, and will, within the limits of feasibility, actively collaborate in the development of this language for academic use and as a language of communication.

8.   The Language Policy takes account of the University's diversity objectives.

9.   The Language Policy positions the University to make a special contribution to the advancement of multilingualism as an asset.

10.   The University accepts the principle that the success of the Language Policy is directly dependent on the establishment of suitable and sufficient language support and language services.

7. Policy provisions

The Language Policy of Stellenbosch University is summarised in the following provisions:

1. Afrikaans and English are the University's languages of learning and teaching, and SU is committed to purposefully extend the academic application of both languages.

2. Afrikaans and English are applied in various usage configurations.

3. Parallel-medium teaching and real-time educational interpreting are used as preferred options where practically feasible and affordable.

4. In postgraduate learning and teaching, both Afrikaans and English are used, with significant utilisation of English as an international academic language.

5. Students' academic language skills in Afrikaans and English are developed systematically.

6. The University promotes institutional multilingualism by judiciously employing Afrikaans and English as well as isiXhosa, depending on the circumstances.

7. Documentation of prime importance (e.g. policies and strategic HR documents relating to service conditions) is made available in Afrikaans and English.

8. English and, where feasible, isiXhosa are the University's languages of external communication alongside Afrikaans.

9. SU encourages the advancement of isiXhosa within the formal programme offering. In certain programmes provision is made for isiXhosa with a view to facilitate effective learning and teaching, especially where the use of the language may be important for career purposes.

10. Being a developing academic language, isiXhosa is advanced through the University's Language Centre, among other structures.

11. The University offers language support and language services in respect of Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa.

8. Conflict resolution

The final responsibility for conflict resolution lies with the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching), who performs this function in consultation with existing management bodies. Complaints about the implementation of the Language Policy and Language Plan are dealt with in the first instance by the deans (in the case of faculties) or line managers (in the case of support services). A further level of conflict resolution is the Senate Academic Planning Committee (for the academic environment) or the Rector's Management Team (in the case of the broader University).

9. Policy governance

The Language Policy is approved by Council upon consultation with Senate and the Institutional Forum.

The owner of the Policy is the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching). The Vice-Rector is responsible for the implementation, management and updating of the Policy, and reports on it to Council via the Rector's Management Team, the Academic Planning Committee and Senate. The Vice-Rector is supported by a Language Planning and

Management Project Team that advises and performs tasks on behalf of the Vice-Rector as determined from time to time.

The curator of the Policy is the Senior Director: Learning and Teaching Enhancement. The curator also acts in an advisory capacity to the Vice-Rector and works closely with the Director: Language Centre. The Director: Language Centre acts, together with the Language Centre staff, in a research, planning, advisory and supporting capacity to execute the Language Policy effectively in faculties and support services environments.

The roles, implementation, monitoring, reporting and other aspects of policy governance are set out in more detail in the Language Plan.

10. Revision

Stellenbosch University takes into account that language-policy-making is a dynamic process. Therefore, the University undertakes to test the Language Policy continuously against changing circumstances by

- conducting research on the implementation, application and monitoring of the Language Policy,

- regularly consulting with the broader University community,

- processing and publishing information gained from such research and consultation, and

- amending the Language Policy where necessary.

11. Disclosure

The Language Policy is a public document and is published along with the Language Plan on the University's website.

12. Supporting document

The Language Plan, being a supporting document to the Language Policy, articulates the most important issues relating to the implementation of the Policy.

13. A policy geared for the future

The Language Policy of Stellenbosch University, being a future-directed policy, strives towards realising the ideal of creating a favourable learning and teaching environment that benefits students; an environment in which the University integrates the advancement of Afrikaans as an academic language with the asset of multilingualism in an imaginative way.