FAQs about SU's Language Policy

When will the new Language Policy take effect?

The new Language Policy and Language Implementation Plans will take effect from the start of 2017. In the second semester of 2016, the current Language Policy will apply, with modules offered in accordance with the language specifications in the 2016 calendars (yearbooks). As in the first semester, and subject to available resources, SU will continue with additional measures to ensure that students who are not proficient in Afrikaans or English are not excluded from lectures.

What impact will the new policy have on current students?

The current Language Policy will still apply in the second semester of 2016.

With regards to planning for 2017, each faculty will compile a Language Implementation Plan, which must be aligned with the principles of the Language Policy and be approved by Senate. The plan will make provision for customised accountability mechanisms for different faculties, and may include qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The new Policy for 2017 ensures that no student will be excluded from the SU academic offering based on the student's command of Afrikaans or English.

How will the new policy be implemented in practice?

Teaching and Learning

For undergraduate modules Afrikaans and English are the languages of learning and teaching, to be used in a combination of:
- facilitated learning opportunities (lectures, tutorials and practical sessions); and
- learning support facilitated by information and communication technology (ICT); as well as
- real-time interpreting in some lectures.

Separate lectures in Afrikaans and English will be offered for large groups where reasonably practicable and pedagogically sound, but group work, assignments, tutorials and practical sessions will involve students from both language groups.

In lectures where Afrikaans and English are used, all information will be conveyed in English, with a summary or emphasis also repeated in Afrikaans. Questions are answered in at least the language in which they were formulated. For first-year modules simultaneous interpreting will be available during each lecture. During second and subsequent years interpreting will be provided upon request by a faculty.

Undergraduate lectures may be offered in one language only if the subject matter justifies doing so; if the assigned lecturer is proficient to teach in one language only; or where all the students in a class group unanimously voted for one language by secret ballot.

Students will be supported in English and Afrikaans during facilitated learning opportunities, for example:
- consultations during office hours;
- routinely scheduled tutorials and practical sessions;
- learning facilitated by ICT (podcasts and vodcasts); and

- services offered by the Language Centre.

All compulsory reading material will be available in English, and also in Afrikaans (excluding published material) where SU module frameworks and study guides are available in English and Afrikaans.

In undergraduate modules question papers for tests, examinations and other summative assessments are available in Afrikaans and English, and students may complete all assessments and written work in either Afrikaans or English.

Internal Communication

Internal institutional communication will be in either Afrikaans or English, or both, and all three chosen languages may be used at institutional events. Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa where reasonably practicable are the languages of external communication.

How will isiXhosa be expanded (as stated in the Language Policy)?

Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa are used judiciously at official events, such as official meetings, ceremonial occasions and inaugural lectures.

IsiXhosa as an emerging formal academic language receives particular attention for the purpose of its incremental introduction into selected disciplinary domains, prioritised in accordance with student needs in a well-planned, well-organised and systematic manner.

The academic role and leadership of the Department of African Languages, through its extensive experience in advanced-level teaching and research in language and linguistic fields will be harnessed to the full.

In certain programmes, isiXhosa is already used with a view to facilitating effective learning and teaching, especially where the use of isiXhosa may be important for career purposes.

SU is committed to increasing the use of isiXhosa, to the extent that this is reasonably practicable, for example through basic communication skills short courses for staff and students, career-specific communication, discipline-specific terminology guides (printed and mobile applications) and phrase books.

How will Afrikaans be advanced at SU?

Other than using Afrikaans for internal and external communication as well as teaching and learning as described in the relevant sections of the policy, Afrikaans is further advanced as follows:
- conducting research, holding symposia, presenting short courses, supporting language teachers and hosting guest lecturers in Afrikaans;
- presenting Afrikaans language acquisition courses;
- developing academic and professional literacy in Afrikaans;
- supporting Afrikaans reading and writing development;
- providing language services that include translation into Afrikaans, and editing of and document design for Afrikaans texts;
- developing multilingual glossaries with Afrikaans as one of the languages; and
- promoting Afrikaans through popular-science publications in the general media.

Where can I access the new Language Policy?

Download it from www.sun.ac.za/language (English version) and www.sun.ac.za/taal (Afrikaans version).

What processes have been followed for the new Language Policy?

The Language Policy of Stellenbosch University is determined by the University Council with the concurrence of Senate after consultation with various stakeholders.

The revision of the Language Policy was completed within a period of five months to ensure that a new draft Language Policy could be tabled at the scheduled Council meeting of 22 June 2016. The revision was given urgent priority and followed a thorough and consultative process.

The Language Revision Work Group compiled a first draft Language Policy, which was published on the SU website, and stakeholders were invited to give input and submit proposals online or via e-mail from 22 March to 22 April 2016. A total of 517 comments submitted by stakeholders and interested groups were received and considered.

From 22 April until 5 May, the Work Group had 14 days to prepare a second draft Language Policy taking feedback into account that bolstered the policy to promote inclusivity through multilingualism.

The second draft was discussed by all the faculty boards early in May, who gave inputs on how the policy should enable their delivery on the academic project in a pedagogically sound manner.

Council formulated guiding principles for the Language Policy at a special meeting on 21 May. The feedback from the faculty boards and Council's principles were considered by the Work Group and a final draft Language Policy was compiled for consideration by the Executive Committee of Senate, Senate and the Institutional Forum.

The final draft Language Policy, accompanied by the input and feedback from these bodies, was considered by Council on 22 June 2016 and approved.

Is the new Language Policy constitutional?

The Language Policy gives effect to specific sections of the South African Constitution: section 29(2) related to language in education and section 29 (1)(b) related to access to higher education, read with section 9 pertaining to equality and the prohibition against direct and indirect unfair discrimination.

It also serves the strategic objectives of SU as formulated in the Institutional Intent and Strategy (IIS) and the interests of the academic project, its students and its staff members.

Why a new Language Policy?

Whereas the November 2014 Language Policy (in place until the end of 2016) attempted to give *equal offering* in English and Afrikaans to all students taking sufficient cognisance of students' academic literacy in these two languages, the new Policy (in effect from the start of 2017) uses both these languages to provide *equitable access* to students who speak English or Afrikaans or one of the other indigenous South African languages.

The Language policy is based on two normative foundational principles, which must guide all aspects of the interpretation and implementation of this Policy:

- Language should promote access to the institution and should support academic and administrative success.
- Language should facilitate pedagogically sound teaching and learning.

SU therefore uses inclusive multilingualism to ensure that no student or staff member is excluded from active participation in SU activities.