

Language Policy of the Stellenbosch University

The core of the policy

The University of Stellenbosch is committed to the use and sustained development of Afrikaans as an academic language in a multilingual context. Language is used at the University in a manner that is directed towards engagement with knowledge in a diverse society.

1. Introduction

The core function of the University of Stellenbosch is its engagement with knowledge. The spectrum of knowledge of the University is compact in the sense that a number of focus areas form its core, and broad in the sense that it covers a variety of academic disciplines and that it also includes learning and teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and research.

The University takes as a starting point that the international context is of crucial significance in its engagement with knowledge. At the same time the University is situated within a local socio-cultural context, both within South Africa and particularly in the Western Cape region. The University aims to apply locally the knowledge that has been discovered inter alia within the international context, taking into account the differences within the regional community and national society.

One aspect of our society is that a variety of languages function within it. The ascription in the Constitution of official status to eleven different languages amounts to an acknowledgement that each of these languages is recognized as an asset that should be used as a means of developing the human potential of the country. This important personal, professional and social asset should be exploited on a collective basis by the South African tertiary education sector to achieve this end.

Against this background, the University makes a contribution to the development of Afrikaans as an academic language, but at the same time takes into consideration the multicultural and multilingual reality of South Africa by, alongside the particular focus on Afrikaans, also taking English and isiXhosa into account.

2. Principles

The Language Policy of the University is implemented taking the following important principles into account:

1. The University is a centre of excellence directed toward the production of knowledge through research, learning and instruction.

2. The University recognises and respects the core values enshrined within the South African Constitution.
3. The University takes into consideration strategic national policy and the processes of policy formation.
4. The Language Policy takes into account the values and premises set out in the Strategic Framework of the University.
5. The University recognises the particular status of Afrikaans as an academic language and shares the responsibility for promoting Afrikaans as an academic language.
6. The University recognises the status of English as an important local and also acknowledged international academic language.
7. The University recognises the status of isiXhosa as an important local language, but also as a developing academic language, and intends, within the limitations of what is possible, to contribute actively to its development.
8. The Language Policy takes into account the diversification goals of the University.
9. The Language Policy places the University in a position to make a particular contribution to the promotion of multilingualism as an asset.
10. The University accepts the principle that the success of the Language Policy is dependent on the provision of acceptable and sufficient language services.

3. The multilingual context

The University's commitment to Afrikaans as an academic language does not exclude the use of various languages at the University in its engagement with knowledge: apart from Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa, Dutch, German and French are included.

Afrikaans

The University is committed to the exploitation of the academic potential of Afrikaans as a means of empowering a large and diverse community. This includes a significant group from disadvantaged communities, a considerable number of non-Afrikaans speakers as well as Afrikaans speakers who have a better command of Afrikaans than English. The University wishes to empower all such groups through university education in Afrikaans.

The Afrikaans language community is *demographically*, on the grounds of both the number of its users and its geographical distribution regionally and nationally, one of the stronger language communities in the country. Speakers of Afrikaans are in the majority at the University of Stellenbosch among both students and staff. *Culturally* Afrikaans is a standard language that has for decades functioned as an academic language and is a national asset as a fully developed cultural language.

English

The University of Stellenbosch makes use of English in its engagement with knowledge because of the language's international and local function, the strong presence of English speakers in the University and the need for academic proficiency in English for students who do not have English as their home language. English functions in combination with Afrikaans in the University

isiXhosa

isiXhosa is an official language used by one of the larger language communities spread over a large area of South Africa that is on the increase in the Western Cape, among other regions. The University undertakes to contribute by means of particular initiatives to the development of isiXhosa as an academic language

4. Provisions of the Language Policy

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

1. Afrikaans is the default language of undergraduate learning and instruction ¹
2. English is used in particular circumstances as a language of undergraduate learning and instruction.

Provisions 1 and 2 mean that, unless otherwise determined, the A-specification of the Language Plan applies automatically in all undergraduate modules. Any deviation in undergraduate modules from this default position will be allowed only after the reasons have been thoroughly considered.

3. Afrikaans and English are used in postgraduate learning and instruction.
4. The academic literacy of students in Afrikaans and English will be developed systematically.
5. The default institutional language of the University is Afrikaans.
6. English is used alongside Afrikaans as a language of communication for the University, as circumstances may require.

Provisions 5 and 6 mean that Afrikaans is used in all circumstances as the language of internal communication, but that the particular needs of non-Afrikaans speaking staff and students are catered for with the appropriate sensitivity.

7. Afrikaans, English and, where possible, isiXhosa are the University's languages of external communication.
8. Provision is made for isiXhosa in some programmes with a view to professional communication.
9. The University promotes isiXhosa as a developing academic language, amongst other ways, through its Language Centre.

With provisions 7, 8 and 9, the University wishes to emphasise the earnestness with which it treats its position within the multicultural and multilingual context of South Africa. The Language Centre will be launching particular actions to that end through its Unit for isiXhosa, a unit that functions in close co-operation with the Department of African Languages.

10. The University of Stellenbosch provides language services with respect to Afrikaans and English, and, in a limited sense, isiXhosa.

5. Language policy formation as a dynamic process

The University of Stellenbosch considers the forming of a Language Policy to be a dynamic process. For that reason, the University undertakes to test the Language Policy against changing circumstances by:

¹ The term "default" is the wellknown sense "automatically", and, as far as the management of the Language Policy and Plan is concerned, in the sense "the option not needing any further motivation." Both these senses are well-established.

- doing research on the implementation, application and monitoring of the Language Policy,
- consulting regularly with the wider university community,
- processing and making known the information emerging from this research and consultation, and
- adapting the Language Policy according to circumstances.

6. Language Plan

The Language Policy of the University is accompanied by a detailed language plan that is set out in the Calendar.

7. A policy directed toward the future

The Language Policy of the University of Stellenbosch seeks to contribute, as a future-oriented policy, to the realisation of the ideal of creating a favourable learning and instruction environment for the benefit of the students; an environment within which Afrikaans as an academic language and the asset of multilingualism are combined in an imaginative way.