**Languages of tuition at Stellenbosch University**

Stellenbosch University (SU) is committed to knowledge exchange in a diverse society and, through its Language Policy, seeks to extend fair access to SU to all students and staff. Multilingualism is an important differentiator for SU, where Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa are used in academic, administrative, professional and social settings. More information on language usage at SU is available on the website at www.sun.ac.za/language and in a *Matieland* article.

Language Policy

Stellenbosch University accepted a new Language Policy in 2016. This policy and the language implementation plans that go with it have been implemented since the beginning of 2017.

Every faculty compiles its own Language Implementation Plan. The policy and plans will ensure that no student who has yet to master Afrikaans or English on an academic level will be excluded from academic tuition.

**What can you expect?**

For undergraduate modules, Afrikaans and English are the languages of teaching and learning, and are used in a combination of the following modes:

* Facilitated learning opportunities (lectures, tutorials and practicals)
* Learner support via information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as video or audio recordings (podcasts)
* Real-time interpreting of some lectures.

Where classes are large, an effort will be made wherever possible to offer separate lectures in Afrikaans and English. When students from both language groups are studying the same module, both groups will participate in group work, class assignments, tutorials and practical sessions, the aim being to stimulate frank debate and a diversity of ideas and viewpoints.

Where Afrikaans and English are used in the same lecture, all information will be conveyed in at least English, with a summary or notes of key points in Afrikaans as well. Questions will at least be answered in the language in which they are asked. In your first year, real-time interpreting will be another possible form of support where practical. In some sessions, for example field work or computer literacy, interpreting would not be feasible. In your second and subsequent years, interpreting could be provided at the request of your faculty.

Undergraduate lectures may only be offered in one language when the learning material warrants this, the lecturer concerned can only teach in that language, or the class votes unanimously for one language. For first-year students at least, real-time interpreting into the ‘other’ language will be available.

* The language mode for each of your academic modules will be explained in the module framework concerned, as well as on your faculty’s webpage.

The support you will receive

Further support in Afrikaans or English is available to students through consultations during office hours, scheduled tutorials and practicals, ICT-supported learning (audio and video recordings), and the services of the Language Centre.

All compulsory reading material will be provided in English and, except for published material, also in Afrikaans. SU’s module frameworks and study guides will still be available in English and Afrikaans. In undergraduate modules, question papers for tests, examinations and other assessments will be prepared in Afrikaans and English, and students may complete all assessments and written work in Afrikaans or English. The multilingual model supports Afrikaans first-year students who have not yet mastered academic English. In their final year of study, through the academic support that is available, these students should be able to participate nationally and internationally.

Help each other to succeed

The Language Policy is not ideologically motivated. It does not accord any special status to any of South Africa’s official languages, and the language allocation is not based on a given percentage of lecture time per language. SU believes that multilingualism is an additional asset for any graduate. The intention is rather to use the languages of tuition in practical ways that will ensure no one is excluded from knowledge, that no one language is forced on students, and that students are encouraged to learn additional languages.

The implementation of multilingualism is complex and there is no universal quick fix. The language proficiency of a particular group of students is the biggest variable – it will differ from module to module, and from year to year. Therefore language application should be flexible to adapt to changing needs. Feedback to lecturers is important. Share examples of successful language implementation and make suggestions for improvement with a positive and helpful attitude.

Where students believe that language usage is jeopardising their study success, or that they are being excluded from the academic offering on the basis of the language of tuition, the matter can be taken up in the department or faculty, or through the faculty’s representatives on the Academic Affairs Council that operates under the auspices of the Student Representative Council. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the internal processes, students can approach the university ombud at ombud@sun.ac.za