

## Comparison: 2021 and 2026 SU Language Policy

This document summarises the proposed key differences between the SU Language Policy (2021) and the first draft of the SU Language Policy (2026).

- The use of yellow highlights indicates substantive changes to the 2026 review document in comparison to the 2021 policy.
- As a general principle, the task team sought to adopt a lighter, more accessible, and less legalistic tone throughout the Policy. This approach informed the revisions across all sections, with the aim of improving clarity, readability, and engagement, while retaining the necessary legal and institutional alignment.
- The title of the responsible executive portfolio has been updated from Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning to Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, as well as references to the Dean of Students, to reflect the revised institutional structure.
- A new enabling provision supports multilingual teaching, learning, administration, and institutional communication through ICT (information and communication technology) and AI (artificial intelligence) tools, with emphasis on ethical, research-led, and human-centred use.

### AI appears in four main Policy groupings:

#### Teaching and learning (7.1.1 + 7.1.6)

- AI-assisted learning tools
- AI translation/interpretation
- AI as pedagogical support (with limitations acknowledged)

#### Institutional planning (7.4.2 + 7.5.2)

- AI in staff development and teaching support
- AI embedded in funded multilingual innovation initiatives

#### Technology infrastructure (7.7)

- AI-enabled language services (translation, transcription, captioning)
- Ethical + epistemic constraints
- Research-led development principle

#### Implicit systems context (7.2.6–7.2.7)

- IT and digital platforms (indirectly allow for AI integration, but do not explicitly name it)

## Feedback on the proposed edits

Members of the Stellenbosch University community are invited to provide input as part of a public participation process (18 May to 8 June 2026). For ease of reference, input is invited in three parts – Part A, Part B and Part C. Part A includes sections 1-6 of the draft policy, Part B includes section 7, and Part C includes sections 8-12.

### PART A

#### Key changes: 1. Introduction

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Integration of "Essence of the Policy"	The "Essence of the Policy" appears as a separate framing textbox, distinct from the introduction.	Key ideas from the "Essence" section (e.g. knowledge production, linguistic diversity, intellectual value of languages) are integrated into a single, cohesive introduction, removing redundancy and improving coherence.
Alignment with Vision 2040	Not explicitly foregrounded in the introduction.	Explicit reference to Vision 2040, strengthening alignment with SU's long-term strategic direction.
Scope of language use	Focus primarily on teaching and learning contexts, but also included administrative, social, and living contexts.	Scope remained similar, but more detail provided on academic, administrative, social, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and residential contexts.
Language as social practice	Linguistic diversity and intellectual wealth referenced in general terms.	Language explicitly framed as a social practice linked to identity, power, diversity and belonging, and ways of thinking.
Implementation and resourcing	Focus on equitable access and pedagogical soundness, with limited detail on implementation mechanisms.	Includes reference to specific implementation mechanisms such as translation, interpreting, multilingual materials, and technology, with acknowledgement of resource constraints and incremental implementation. More emphasis on AI and technology. Kept SU language implementation plan (2024-2026) in mind.
Access, participation, and engagement	Emphasis primarily on equitable access to education.	Expanded framing to include equitable access, participation, and meaningful engagement across the University.

## Key changes: 2. The multilingual context

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Overall structure	Linear narrative moving from institutional context to description of languages, with broader discussion of multilingualism embedded at the end of the section.	Reorganised into a structured progression from institutional context to institutional and individual multilingualism to multilingualism as attitude and practice, and then to contextual framing of institutional languages, including SASL.
Language function framing	Languages described mainly as tools for communication, inclusion, and internationalisation.	Languages framed as resources for knowledge production, cognition, identity, and social meaning-making.
Role of translanguaging	Mentioned briefly as a classroom practice example.	Embedded as a key plurilingual practice supporting learning, communication, and repertoire development across contexts.
Scope of multilingualism	Primarily institutional and academic domains, with limited reference to broader university life.	Expanded to include academic, administrative, social, co-curricular, and residential contexts.
Academic literacies	Implied but not conceptually developed.	Explicitly linked to plurilingual repertoires and disciplinary language development as a structured learning process. Explicitly includes visual and digital literacies.

## Key changes: 3. Application of the Policy

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
External engagement	Not explicitly addressed.	Introduces recognition that, although the Policy does not formally govern external engagement, language remains central to community interaction, access, and participation.

## Key changes: 4. Purpose of the Policy

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Core definition of purpose	Narrow focus on regulating and governing language use.	Retains regulatory function but introduces language as gateway to knowledge, epistemic access, and identity formation.
Conceptual framing	Implicitly administrative.	Explicitly epistemological and identity-oriented.
Orientation	Regulatory/managerial.	Regulatory + enabling + transformative.

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Multilingualism	Not foregrounded as central purpose.	Explicitly introduces multilingual mindset as a core aim.
Scope of outcomes	Broad but undefined.	Structured across teaching, research, administration, social impact, and curriculum transformation.
Equity framing	General.	Explicit linkage between language, access, and participation.

### Key changes: 5. Aims of the Policy

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Structure	5 aims.	6 aims.
Constitutional alignment	Formal legal phrasing.	Same legal basis, more streamlined wording (retained "where reasonably practicable").
Strategy alignment	Vision 2040 + older strategic framework.	Updated to Vision 2040 + Strategy Plan 2026–2030.
Multilingualism	Single aim combining all aspects.	Split into plurilingual repertoires + multilingual mindset.
Conceptual depth	Limited elaboration.	Expanded framing of multilingualism as repertoire, practice, and institutional culture.

### Key changes: 6. Policy principles

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Framing	Compliance-oriented.	More interpretive and university-life oriented.
Foundational principles	Multilingualism, access, pedagogy.	Retained and clarified with stronger pedagogical framing.
Academic literacies	Brief.	Expanded and linked to plurilingual development.
Translanguaging	Limited reference.	Explicit and integrated across teaching and learning (not always, assessment). For this reason, rule of thumb is not to use the term teaching-learning-assessment (TLA), but

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
		rather to write out what is meant in full for each instance where teaching and learning is mentioned. Sometimes, assessment is intentionally omitted.
African languages	Supported broadly.	Stronger affirmation of African languages as languages of learning and scholarship.
Technology	Basic service framing.	Includes research-led AI and digital integration.

## PART B

### Key changes: 7. Policy provisions

Dimension	Current Policy	Revised Draft
Overall structure	Highly segmented and procedural.	Retains structure.
Multilingualism framing	Afrikaans/English primary, isiXhosa incremental.	Same structure but more explicitly framed as intellectual and institutional resource.
Translanguaging	Limited classroom practice.	Expanded as guiding principle across formal and informal contexts.
African languages	Conditional. "Where pedagogical need and where capacity exists"	Strengthened as academic languages of teaching and research.
isiXhosa	Incremental, cautious framing.	More intentional developmental framing with institutional responsibility.
ICT	ICT-enhanced learning only.	ICT + AI explicitly included (adaptive tools, translation, captioning).
AI	Not present.	Explicitly included with ethical and pedagogical safeguards.
Equity framing	Access-focused.	Access + participation + epistemic engagement.

## PART C

### **Key changes: 8. Feedback, monitoring and conflict resolution**

Retains structure but adopts more developmental language around concerns/feedback rather than purely compliance framing.  
Policy extended to heads of schools.