

2026 review draft 1 – Language Policy of Stellenbosch University

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Validity	The English version of this Policy is the operative version, and the Afrikaans and isiXhosa versions are translations thereof.

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1. Introduction

Stellenbosch University (SU) is committed to engagement with knowledge in a diverse society. The Language Policy aims to give effect to sections 29(1)(b) and 29(2) of the South African Constitution in relation to language usage in the University's academic, administrative, professional and social contexts. Within this constitutional framework, language is understood as a central enabler of participation, epistemic access and academic success.

The Policy provides a framework for the equitable and inclusive use of the University's official languages. It aligns with the [Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions \(2020\)](#), ensuring that SU meets national expectations for multilingual teaching, learning, assessment, research, engagement and administration.

The Policy also supports [the University's Vision 2040](#), which positions SU as an internationally recognised, socially responsive, and inclusive institution. It acknowledges the value of language and multilingualism in academic scholarship, communication and institutional life. This includes not only formal academic and administrative domains, but also co- and extra-curricular, residential and broader campus living spaces, where language practices shape inclusion, belonging and student experience. Thus, language is positioned as not a purely linguistic phenomenon but as a practice that is deeply intertwined with identity and that reflects people's values, perception of norms and power dynamics, group belonging and how they think about the world.

In advancing multilingualism as both a resource and a strategic priority, the Policy acknowledges that institutional support for language use will be context-dependent. Support may include translation and interpreting services, the development of multilingual materials, and investment in language-related capacity and technologies. Such support is shaped by available resources, such as language implementation funding, and will be developed incrementally in ways that are responsive to institutional needs and priorities.

By adopting this approach, the Policy seeks to expand access, deepen participation and support meaningful engagement across all areas of the University.

2. The multilingual context

As a research-intensive institution with national and global reach, SU attracts students and staff from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We acknowledge and value the intellectual wealth inherent in all South African and international languages. We recognise them as resources for knowledge production, teaching, learning and, assessment, research and engagement, both at institutional and individual level.

2.1. Institutional and individual multilingualism

The Language Policy focuses not only on institutional multilingualism (i.e. establishing multilingual institutional spaces where a diverse group of people coexist), but also on individual multilingualism, actively encouraging individuals to use more than one language.

Individual multilingualism is recognised as an academic and social asset. In South Africa's multilingual context, students and staff already bring plurilingual repertoires — the ability to use multiple languages and dialects in complementary ways — which can be harnessed and expanded to support communication, learning and understanding across different contexts.

Creating opportunities for individual multilingualism allows individuals to develop their linguistic repertoire made up of languages and varieties of languages in different forms and at different levels of mastery. As individuals' experience of language in cultural context expands, they do not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments. Instead, they develop a communicative, plurilingual competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contribute and in which languages interrelate and interact.

Translanguaging inside and outside the classroom is one such plurilingual practice. While it is important to create space for students to use tools such as translanguaging to communicate informally in and outside the classroom, there is also a parallel need for students to study language(s) formally and utilise the academic and technical registers of those languages. At the same time, the Policy emphasises the acquisition and use of formal academic language, including technical and disciplinary vocabulary, so that multilingual skills provide meaningful engagement with knowledge and professional opportunities instead of remaining symbolic. Section 7.1 of this policy sets out how these principles are applied in learning and teaching.

2.2. Multilingualism as attitude and practice

Multilingualism is about more than an individual's willingness to learn and use multiple languages. The Language Policy also focuses on promoting inclusivity and an appreciation of the value of diversity. Therefore, multilingualism is also an *attitude* that facilitates a transformative student experience and, ultimately, a more rounded graduate. Multilingualism equips students to tap into a broader and more diverse knowledge base; to engage with society in a way that speaks to the heart, not just the mind; to be dynamic professionals and digital knowers who are able to demonstrate problem-solving, listening and interpersonal skills; and to grow into well-rounded individuals who can make informed decisions that take more than just their own thinking into consideration. This awareness would, for instance, be visible in institutional gatherings where an initial check is done to determine language requirements and where translanguaging occurs. It would also be visible in individuals' willingness to learn and use a variety of languages.

Within this broader commitment to multilingualism, SU focuses its institutional language practices on Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa (in alphabetical order), as languages predominantly used in the Western Cape and widely represented in the University community. While we recognise all languages as valuable, these three languages are prioritised for strategic use in academic, administrative, professional and social contexts. At the same time, the University fosters opportunities for the inclusion of other South African languages, such as South African Sign Language (SASL), where reasonably practicable.

Contextual considerations for choice of predominant languages, described in alphabetical order:

- 2.2.1 **Afrikaans** is one of the most widely understood languages in South Africa and the most widely spoken home language in the Western Cape. It has a fully standardised formal variety in addition to its many spoken varieties. Afrikaans is also an intellectualised language with an extensive and dynamic academic repertoire, shaped in part by the University's historical and ongoing contributions. The language is a valuable resource that is widely used at all levels of South African social, cultural, educational and public life.
- 2.2.2 **English** is widely used in South Africa and internationally, particularly in higher education, and often serves as a common language of communication across diverse language groups in social, academic and professional settings.
- 2.2.3 **isiXhosa** is one of the most widely spoken languages in South Africa and in the Western Cape. In the province, it is the second most widely spoken home language (after Afrikaans); and is widely used in everyday communication, particularly in urban and peri-urban contexts, as well as in social, cultural, educational and public life. As a fully developed intellectual language with an established and expanding academic repertoire, isiXhosa can express and critically engage with complex concepts across a wide range of scholarly, professional and disciplinary discourses.
- 2.2.4 **South African Sign Language (SASL)** is recognised as an important language of communication and, as of 2023, one of South Africa's official languages. While SASL is not yet fully integrated across all University operations, its inclusion in the Policy reflects SU's commitment to access, inclusion and the gradual development of institutional support for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students and staff.

3. Application of the Policy

The Policy applies to all SU students and staff. It governs language use across faculties, professional and administrative support services, student organisations and residences, and all governance and management structures; thereby ensuring consistency, inclusivity and accessibility throughout the institution.

Although the Policy does not apply to the University's engagement with external communities and partners, we recognise that language is central to shaping access, participation and reciprocity in community interaction. In this context, SU is committed to language practices that are contextually appropriate, inclusive and responsive to the linguistic repertoires of the communities with which we engage, to the extent that it is reasonably practicable for the University.

4. Purpose of the Policy

SU recognises that language is more than a communication tool; it is a gateway to knowledge, an instrument of epistemological access and a way to express identity.

Therefore, the purpose of the Policy is to promote a multilingual mindset. As a policy, it also regulates, governs and manages language use in all areas of the University.

The Policy provides a framework and enabling environment for:

- promoting equitable and epistemological access to and participation in teaching, learning and assessment, research and social impact;
- supporting both institutional and individual multilingualism;
- ensuring that language practices are inclusive, academically rigorous and socially responsible;
- preserving and enhancing the intellectual, cultural and social wealth of the country's languages;
- strengthening SU's role as a nationally and internationally engaged, diverse and socially responsive institution; and
- cultivating intentional curriculum transformation in a context of critical reflection on knowledge systems and epistemic inclusion.

5. Aims of the Policy

The aims of the SU Language Policy are as follows:

- 5.1** Give effect to sections 29(2), 29(1)(b) and 9 of the Constitution, ensuring equitable access to higher education where reasonably practicable and prohibiting unfair discrimination on the basis of language.
- 5.2** Implement the [Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions \(2020\)](#) in accordance with sections 3 and 27(2) of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 to support consistent and inclusive language practices across the sector.
- 5.3** Contribute to [SU's Vision 2040](#) and [Strategy Plan 2026-2030](#), thereby fostering an inclusive, accessible and academically excellent environment for students, staff and stakeholders.
- 5.4** Facilitate academic and administrative functions across SU, aligned to our core strategic themes: a thriving SU, a transformative student experience, purposeful partnerships and inclusive networks, collaborative teaching and learning, research for impact, and SU as an employer of choice.
- 5.5** Harness and expand the plurilingual repertoires of students and staff across teaching, learning, assessment, research, social impact, administration and co-curricular activities, recognising the diversity of languages and dialects in the University community.
- 5.6** Foster a multilingual mindset that values linguistic diversity as a resource for teaching, learning and assessment, collaboration and knowledge production, while encouraging openness to different ways of thinking, communicating and being. In doing so, the University seeks to cultivate an inclusive, welcoming and socially responsive institutional culture.

6. Policy principles

The Language Policy is guided by foundational normative principles that shape its interpretation and implementation across all aspects of University life. These principles ensure that language use at SU supports equity, access, inclusion and academic excellence.

- 6.1** In line with the [Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions \(2020\)](#), individual and societal multilingualism is regarded as a resource that facilitates cognitive development, epistemic access, inclusivity, transformation, social cohesion and respect for all languages.
- 6.2** Language at SU should broaden access to and enhance success in academic, administrative, professional and social contexts. It should not constitute a barrier to students or staff, in line with the Constitution's imperatives to redress past discrimination and prevent direct or indirect unfair discrimination.
- 6.3** All aspects of the Policy and its implementation should be informed by sound pedagogical principles, supporting meaningful and effective student learning outcomes.

Building on the foundational principles above, SU further commits to the following:

- 6.4** SU recognises the languages and language varieties used by students and staff, taking into account their preferences and levels of proficiency.
- 6.5** SU acknowledges the complex role of language in society, and that all languages are valuable resources for the cultivation of knowledge and academic engagement.
- 6.6** SU applies its chosen languages in ways that include all students, staff and stakeholders, creating equitable access to teaching, learning, assessment and administrative processes.
- 6.7** SU recognises that academic literacies are complex and develop within specific disciplines. Students build these competencies on the foundation of the languages, dialects and varieties that they already know. Academic literacies include visual and digital literacies as well as the ability to understand and use formal, discipline-specific language.

SU supports the use of multiple languages in teaching, learning and assessment, and research, and affirms that all languages – including African languages – function as languages of teaching, learning, assessment and scholarship. Ongoing work at national and institutional levels seeks to strengthen and expand their use in academic contexts, including through departmental and curricular initiatives, terminology development and collaborative projects.

Students are encouraged to draw on their plurilingual repertoires—the ability to use multiple languages and dialects in complementary ways—to engage more effectively with academic content.

- 6.8** SU establishes language services and academic staff development programmes, and invests in the research-led development and use of appropriate technologies, to support the effective implementation of the Policy (see 7.7).
- 6.9** The Language Policy and its implementation are guided by what is reasonably practicable in specific contexts. Relevant considerations include, but are not limited to, the foundational principles set out in 6.1 to 6.3, the number of students who may benefit from a particular mode of implementation, students' academic language proficiency, the availability and language proficiency of staff, developments in research-led language and translation technologies, timetable and venue constraints, and the University's available resources and competing priorities.

7. Policy provisions

The policy principles in paragraph 6 give rise to the following binding policy provisions:

7.1 Learning and teaching

Stellenbosch University values multilingualism and recognises the intellectual, cultural and social wealth of all South African and international languages. with Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa serving as institutional languages that are central to teaching, learning and assessment as well as research and administration. In recognition of the Constitutional imperative to promote multilingualism and equitable access to education, Afrikaans and English function as the primary languages of instruction in our classes (depending on institutional resources and capacity), while isiXhosa is increasingly supported where practicable.

Learning at SU also occurs in informal, co-curricular and social contexts – residences, study groups, consultations, learning support environments and online platforms – where students and staff may draw on their full range of language repertoires to enhance understanding, engagement and collaborative knowledge-building.

7.1.1 In the spirit of translanguaging, the policy provides space for the flexible use of languages of learning and teaching in tutorials, practicals, consultations, study groups, learning support environments and online platforms. Translanguaging across multiple languages is encouraged to support and enhance learning outcomes and participation.

SU follows the principles of translanguaging in the following ways:

- Encourages students and staff to draw on their full plurilingual repertoires to facilitate understanding, engagement and meaningful participation in academic activities.
- Supports the use of multiple languages as a tool for explanation, discussion and collaborative problem-solving, while maintaining the clarity and integrity of academic content.
- Provides academic staff with guidance and resources, where reasonably practicable, to integrate multilingual practices effectively into their

teaching, learning and assessment. Such support includes language-sensitive learning materials, assessment design, classroom interactions and the **considered, research-led use of appropriate technologies to support multilingual engagement and access.**

- Recognises that African languages function as languages of teaching, learning and assessment. We support their use and development where reasonably practicable, including through departmental initiatives, terminology development and research-led projects.

These provisions aim to foster an inclusive, equitable and intellectually rich **learning and teaching** environment where all students can access, engage with and contribute to knowledge, while also developing the academic literacies required for success in their disciplines.

- 7.1.2 Undergraduate modules are offered according to any of the arrangements set out in 7.1.3, 7.1.4 and 7.1.5. As regards undergraduate modules at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 8, 7.1.8 applies.
- 7.1.3 For undergraduate modules where it is reasonably practicable and pedagogically sound to have **more than one class group**:
- 7.1.3.1 Separate lectures are offered in Afrikaans and English.
- 7.1.3.2 Learning opportunities (such as group work, assignments, tutorials and practicals) involving students from various language groups, are utilised to promote integration within modules and programmes.
- 7.1.3.3 Students are supported in Afrikaans and English during a combination of appropriate, facilitated learning opportunities (e.g. consultations during office hours or routinely scheduled tutorials and practicals).
- 7.1.4 For undergraduate modules where both Afrikaans and English are used **in the same class group** the combination of facilitated learning opportunities is as follows:
- 7.1.4.1 During each lecture, all information is conveyed at least in English, and summaries or emphasis on content are also provided in Afrikaans. Questions in Afrikaans and English are, where reasonably practicable, answered in the language of the question.
- 7.1.4.2 Students are supported in Afrikaans and English during a combination of appropriate, facilitated learning opportunities (e.g. consultations during office hours, or routinely scheduled tutorials and practicals).
- 7.1.4.3 For first-year modules, SU makes simultaneous interpreting available during lectures, either on-site or online. In the second and subsequent years of study, SU makes on-site or online simultaneous interpreting available upon request by a faculty if the needs of the students warrant the service and SU has the resources to provide it. If two weeks have passed with no students making use of the interpreting service in a module, it may be discontinued.

7.1.5 In the following instances, undergraduate lectures will be offered in **one language only**:

7.1.5.1 In modules that focus explicitly on a particular language, instruction may be conducted entirely in that language. In exceptional cases, this may apply to other disciplines, such as specialised advanced modules where only one language is feasible for pedagogical or professional reasons. Such instances are expected to be limited and justified, and do not constitute a general exemption from the Policy's commitment to multilingual learning and teaching.

7.1.5.2 Where the assigned lecturer is proficient to teach only in Afrikaans or English. For these modules additional support is provided.

(a) If the lectures are in Afrikaans, SU makes simultaneous interpreting in English available during lectures, either on-site or online. If the lectures are in English, SU makes simultaneous interpreting of first-year modules available in Afrikaans on-site or online during each lecture. During the second and subsequent years of study, SU makes simultaneous interpreting available in Afrikaans, either on-site or online, upon request by a faculty if the needs of the students warrant the service and SU has the resources to provide it. If two weeks have passed with no students making use of the service in a module, it may be discontinued.

(b) In addition to lectures and where reasonably practicable, appropriate, facilitated learning opportunities (e.g. consultations during office hours, or routinely scheduled tutorials and practicals) are offered in Afrikaans and English.

7.1.5.3 A module may be presented in Afrikaans only or English only if all the students in the class group have been invited to vote (by secret ballot) and have unanimously agreed to it; provided that the lecturers and teaching assistants concerned have the necessary academic language proficiency and agree to do so.

7.1.6 In addition to lectures, and depending on students' needs and what is reasonably practicable, SU may provide a range of ICT-enhanced and AI-assisted learning strategies. These may include educational audio and/or video recordings, interactive digital platforms and adaptive learning tools, which may be offered in English and/or Afrikaans and, where feasible, in isiXhosa and/or SASL.

These approaches are intended to complement – rather than replace – human teaching by supporting self-directed learning, reinforcement of concepts, and revision. The University recognises that AI-mediated translation and interpretation do not uniformly capture the nuances of all languages, particularly African languages and SASL, and therefore promotes their considered, research-led use. SU is committed to the ongoing development, evaluation and refinement of such technologies to enhance their accuracy, accessibility and pedagogical value in multilingual learning contexts.

- 7.1.7 The learning materials for undergraduate modules are made available as follows:
- 7.1.7.1 All prescribed reading material is provided in English, except where the module is about the language itself.
 - 7.1.7.2 Prescribed reading material (excluding published material) is also provided in Afrikaans where reasonably practicable.
 - 7.1.7.3 SU module frameworks and study guides are available in Afrikaans and English.
 - 7.1.7.4 Where reasonably practicable and where there is a pedagogical need, isiXhosa and other languages are used to reinforce concepts; for example, by means of multilingual glossaries of key concepts and academic terms.
- 7.1.8 In postgraduate learning and teaching (with the exception of assessments, which are dealt with under 7.1.9) including undergraduate modules at NQF level 8 and postgraduate qualifications at NQF level 7, English or any other language(s) may be used, provided that the lecturer(s) and all the students are academically proficient in the other language(s).
- 7.1.9 Question papers and other forms of assessment in undergraduate modules, including undergraduate modules at NQF level 8, are available in Afrikaans and English. Students may answer all assessments and submit all written work in either Afrikaans or English or, by prior arrangement, and provided that the lecturer is sufficiently proficient in isiXhosa to grade an assessment, in isiXhosa.
- 7.1.10 Question papers in postgraduate modules are at least available in English. Students may answer all assessments and submit all written work in English or, by prior arrangement and provided that the lecturer and moderator/external examiner is sufficiently proficient in Afrikaans or isiXhosa to grade an assessment, in Afrikaans or isiXhosa.
- 7.1.11 Students with print disabilities who need assistance with inaccessible study material can contact the Resource Office at the Disability Unit. The resource officers can assist with making such material available in braille, enlarged font or electronic formats that can be read using assistive technology.
- 7.1.12 As SASL is the primary language of some Deaf people, a SASL interpreter and/or real-time captioning is available during lectures, tutorials and principal SU public events where required and reasonably practicable.
- 7.1.13 Faculties may motivate to be exempted from the policy provisions under 7.1 in specific instances, only if the exemption is:
- 7.1.13.1 consistent with the principles of the Policy; and

- 7.1.13.2 justified by the human and physical resources available to the University, by pedagogical concerns or by faculty-specific considerations; and
- 7.1.13.3 approved by the relevant faculty board, reported (along with the motivation) to Senate and finally approved by Senate (or, when urgent, by the Executive Committee of Senate).

7.2 Internal communication

- 7.2.1 All official internal institutional communication is conveyed in Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. Institutional policies are translated into isiXhosa in tandem with the development of such policies in Afrikaans and English.
- 7.2.2 The language(s) used during internal meetings must be aimed at ensuring that everybody is included and able to participate.
- 7.2.3 Oral and written enquiries and requests by students and staff are handled in the language of the enquiry or request, where reasonably practicable.
- 7.2.4 Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa are used judiciously at official events such as official meetings, ceremonial occasions and inaugural lectures.
- 7.2.5 In student communities, language is used in a way that ensures that everybody is included and able to participate.
- 7.2.6 The following provisions apply to the user interfaces of information technology (IT) software and mobile applications, and web content management systems:
 - 7.2.6.1 Where multilingual operation is reasonably practicable (e.g. where SU can influence the development of a software application, or where an application supports it, or where SU builds an application), SU supports Afrikaans and English according to the user's language preference.
 - 7.2.6.2 Where commercial software applications do not support multilingual operation, the default language is English.
 - 7.2.6.3 Where the user's language preference is unknown, the default is English.
- 7.2.7 The following provisions apply to information system or software application data:
 - 7.2.7.1 Where reasonably practicable, data pertaining to an individual should be multilingual.
 - 7.2.7.2 Where the data design accommodates multilingualism and where feasible, the associated user interfaces for capturing data should support more than one language.
 - 7.2.7.3 Where the data design caters for only one language, English is used.

7.2.7.4 For all other data English is used.

7.3 External communication

7.3.1 Afrikaans and English and, where reasonably practicable, isiXhosa are SU's languages of external communication.

7.3.2 SU respects the language policies and preferences of its stakeholders, partners and external correspondents. Therefore, we accommodate their preferences as far as reasonably practicable. Where SU does not have the capacity to accede to the language preference, the medium of communication is English.

7.3.3 IT system or application user interfaces for stakeholders (e.g. for alumni, donors and parents or guardians) are treated as at 7.2.6.

7.4 Language planning

7.4.1 Annually, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Academic agrees with the deans of the faculties as well as the **heads of schools on the** mechanisms to ensure accountability for the implementation of the Policy. These must include at the least an annual report regarding the realisation of the language implementation plan at each faculty and school (see 8.1) and a compliance report submitted after each semester (see 8.2), with due regard to the Policy principles detailed in 6 and 7.4.2.1 to 7.4.2.3.

The DVC: Academic reports annually, by no later than the last meetings of Senate and Council for that year, via the Rectorate and Senate to Council on the above-mentioned accountability mechanisms for the following year.

7.4.2 Each faculty describes its implementation of the Policy in its language implementation plan, which must be aimed at ensuring that all modules are accessible and that multilingualism is purposefully promoted so that:

7.4.2.1 the English offering is maintained to achieve full accessibility to SU for academically deserving prospective and current students who prefer to study in English;

7.4.2.2 the Afrikaans offering is managed to sustain access to SU for students who prefer to study in Afrikaans, and to further develop Afrikaans as a language of tuition where reasonably practicable; and

7.4.2.3 isiXhosa is used where and to the extent that this is reasonably practicable and pedagogically sound.

In developing their language implementation plans as per 7.4.2, faculties are encouraged to do the following:

- **Ensure that modules are designed and delivered to maximise accessibility for students across SU's institutional languages.**

- Promote purposeful multilingualism, including translinguaging and the use of African languages where pedagogically sound and practically feasible.
- Provide guidance on staff development, learning resources and technological support – including ICT and AI-assisted tools – to enhance multilingual teaching, learning and assessment.
- Include mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement to ensure that language practices contribute to equity, academic success and an inclusive learning environment.

7.4.3 At least once a year, every faculty must review its use of language for teaching, learning and assessment, and must record the language arrangements in its language implementation plan. The plan is submitted to Senate via the faculty board and the Academic Planning Committee (APC) of Senate. Senate can accept a faculty's language implementation plan or refer it back to them, either with or without conditions. Once accepted, the language arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment in a particular module are published in the relevant module framework.

7.4.4 Changes to the language arrangements in a faculty's language implementation plan that fall outside the regular review process, but are necessitated by, for example, a specific student group's preferred language of tuition, pedagogical considerations or the unavailability of a lecturer with the necessary language proficiency, can be made by the relevant departmental chairperson and dean after consultation with the faculty's academic affairs student committee. These changes are reported at the following faculty board and Senate meetings. The students of the modules concerned must be informed of the changes and the reasons for these changes as soon as practically possible, including via learning management platforms.

7.4.5 Every responsibility centre (RC), including professional and administrative support services and student communities, must regularly review the use of language in their environments and record their language arrangements in the language implementation plan for that division. These plans are aggregated at RC level and reported to Senate via its APC. Senate can accept an RC's language implementation plan or refer it back to the RC, either with or without conditions.

7.5 Promotion of multilingualism

7.5.1 The Language Centre, faculties, language departments, professional and administrative support services, governance and management bodies, and students are co-responsible for the advancement of individual and institutional multilingualism at SU.

7.5.2 SU promotes and incentivises innovative multilingual and translinguaging practices by providing institutional funding; for example, for expanding

teaching, learning and assessment in more than one language in faculties; conducting language research; sharing multilingual and translanguaging best practice; providing the infrastructure and professional development to employ ICT- and AI-enhanced learning strategies; supporting discipline-specific academic literacies; and fostering inter-institutional and trans-institutional collaborations, especially collaborations aimed at developing and strengthening South African official and other languages.

7.5.3 SU supports the development of scholarly content in Afrikaans and the continued use of Afrikaans as a scientific language across the University. We advance the academic value of Afrikaans; for example, by teaching and conducting research in and about Afrikaans; holding symposia, presenting short courses, supporting language teachers and hosting guest lecturers in Afrikaans; presenting Afrikaans language-acquisition courses; developing academic and professional literacies 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; supporting access to scientific texts in Afrikaans; and promoting Afrikaans through academic publications (in relevant research fields where the specific target group can be engaged meaningfully) and popular science publications in the general media.

7.5.4 IsiXhosa as an indigenous formal academic language receives particular attention for the purpose of its incremental introduction into various disciplinary domains. SU prioritises this in accordance with student needs in a well-planned, well-organised and systematic manner, where reasonably practicable and pedagogically sound. To this end, we harness to the full the academic role and leadership of the Department of African Languages, through its extensive experience in advanced-level teaching in and research into language and linguistic fields. In certain programmes, isiXhosa is already used to facilitate effective TLA; 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 and pedagogically sound; for example, through teacher training, short courses in basic communication skills for staff and students, career-specific communication, discipline-specific terminology guides (printed and mobile applications) and phrase books.

7.5.5 As required by the [Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions \(2020\)](#) and on the University's own initiative, SU environments such as the Department of African Languages and the Language Centre will be strengthened with a view to developing South African official languages other than Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa into languages of learning and teaching, scholarship, and research. The University will also explore and document strategies and opportunities for collaboration on intellectualising previously marginalised indigenous languages in higher education in South Africa, and on studying and developing the Khoi, Nama and San languages.

7.5.6 SU will continue to advance the study of international languages and also address the marginalisation of indigenous languages. To the extent that such programmes and modules resort under the faculties of Education and Arts and Social Sciences, as well as the Language Centre, SU will assist, where reasonably practicable, in preparing sufficient language teachers, interpreters, translators and other language practitioners to serve the needs of South Africa's multilingual society.

7.6 Support from the Language Centre

The Language Centre provides language support services for effective implementation of the Language Policy in collaboration with faculties, professional and administrative support services and management bodies. These services include reading and writing development support; language services that include translation, interpreting and editing services; modules in professional communication, academic literacies, and language acquisition for Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa and SASL; and research on language and language use. The faculties, professional and administrative support service divisions, and governance and management bodies may also, after consultation with the Language Centre, provide additional language support of their own.

7.7 Technology-enhanced language support

The implementation of this Language Policy is supported by appropriate ICT and emerging digital technologies, including AI-enabled tools, which may enhance multilingual teaching, learning and assessment as well as administrative processes. Such technologies may support, inter alia, translation, transcription, captioning, terminology development and access to learning materials across languages.

These tools are intended to complement – not replace – human expertise. The University recognises that the effectiveness, accuracy and ethical implications of AI-mediated language support vary across languages and contexts, and are subject to ongoing development. Particular attention must be given to ensuring that such technologies do not reproduce linguistic inequities or reduce the quality and nuance of academic communication.

The University therefore commits to the responsible, research-led and pedagogically grounded integration of technology in support of multilingualism. This includes ongoing evaluation of AI systems in relation to African languages and the alignment of such systems with SU's objectives of equity and access.

8. Feedback, monitoring and conflict resolution

8.1 Each faculty and RC as well as the Students' Representative Council (SRC) submit a report to the Rectorate once a year, by a date determined by the DVC: Academic, detailing:

8.1.1 any difficulties that it has experienced with implementing the Language Policy;

- 8.1.2 any mechanisms, strategies or techniques that have improved the implementation of the Policy or that may better advance the goals of the Policy; and
- 8.1.3 any suggestions for amendments to the Policy.
- 8.2 Each faculty reports in writing to the **DVC: Academic** after the end of each semester on its compliance during that semester with that faculty's language implementation plan. The report must describe in full each instance of non-compliance and the reasons for it, as well as the steps that the faculty has taken or will be taking to avoid future deviations from the language implementation plan.
- 8.3 The **DVC: Academic** may appoint a Language Planning and Management (LPM) Advisory Committee at their discretion to perform the functions assigned to it. These functions could include assisting with the processing of language implementation plans and implementation reports to identify good practices as well as issues for further deliberation, and making recommendations for improvement by faculties and/or professional and administrative support services. The DVC may consider these recommendations for inclusion in the annual Learning and Teaching Report to Council.
- 8.4 The **DVC: Academic** prepares an annual report on matters concerning the Policy to Council, via the Rectorate, Senate and the Language Committee of Council. In preparing this report, the **DVC** takes into account the reports described under 8.1 and 8.2 as well as the feedback from the LPM Advisory Committee (as per 8.3). The aims of the DVC's report include addressing areas of concern and sharing knowledge within the University.
- 8.5 **Students** who wish to raise concerns or complaints on the implementation of the Language Policy are advised to make use of the following procedures:
- 8.5.1 In the case of implementation by faculties, complaints are lodged as prescribed by the relevant faculty's appeals/complaints procedure or, in the absence of such a procedure and in order of preference, with the relevant staff member, the relevant departmental chairperson or head, or the dean. If the complaints are not satisfactorily resolved at faculty level and the complaints are related to academic contexts, students can refer the complaints to the APC, via the Student Academic Affairs Council (AAC), and if not resolved at the APC, the APC refers the matter to Senate, with a recommendation.
- 8.5.2 In the case of implementation by professional and administrative support services, complaints are lodged with the relevant line management function or, in the case of the broader University, with the Rectorate via the Students' Representative Council's executive committee.
- 8.5.3 In the case of implementation in student communities, complaints are lodged with the house committee or the relevant resident head. If the complaints are not satisfactorily resolved at university residence or Commuter Student Organisation (CSO) level, students may refer the complaints to the Director:

Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) or escalate it to the Dean of Students if needed.

8.5.4 In cases where the use of the mentioned structures is not suitable, complaints may be submitted to the SU Ombud for settlement in consultation with the relevant structures.

8.6 **Staff** members can raise concerns or lodge complaints about the implementation of the Language Policy by means of the procedures set out below.

8.6.1 In the case of implementation by faculties, complaints are lodged, in order of preference, with the relevant departmental chairperson, or the dean, or the head of a school.

8.6.2 In the case of implementation by professional and administrative support services, complaints are lodged within the relevant line management function or, in the case of the broader University, with the Rectorate via the DVC: Academic.

8.6.3 In cases where the use of the mentioned structures is not suitable, complaints may be submitted to the SU Ombud for settlement in consultation with the relevant structures.

9. Policy governance

Roles

9.1 The **owner** of the Policy is the DVC: Academic, who is responsible for performing the functions conferred upon the DVC by the provisions elsewhere in the Policy as well as the following functions:

9.1.1 Provide guidance regarding the interpretation and implementation of the Policy.

9.1.2 Initiate and oversee the process of reviewing the Policy.

9.1.3 Appoint a curator for the Policy from the Division of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, and oversee the curator's functioning.

9.1.4 Release and communicate the Policy and monitor its effective implementation.

9.1.5 Oversee the functioning of the LPM Advisory Committee, if appointed.

9.2 The **curator** of the Policy (referred to under 9.1.1.3) has the following responsibilities:

9.2.1 Chair and manage the LPM Advisory Committee, if appointed.

9.2.2 Coordinate, oversee and monitor the University's language planning and management processes.

9.2.3 Raise awareness regarding the Language Policy.

- 9.2.4 Convene one or more task teams for reviewing the Policy when a review process is initiated.
- 9.3 The Language Committee of Council is responsible for assisting Council in exercising its general oversight role regarding language issues at the University, which includes the implementation of the Policy, and in considering any proposed amendments to or replacements of the Policy.
- 9.4 Council has a general oversight responsibility regarding language issues at the University, which includes the implementation of the Policy, and approves the Language Policy with the concurrence of Senate and after consultation with the Institutional Forum.
- 9.5 Senate has an academic oversight responsibility, and Senate's concurrence with Council is required for the approval of the Language Policy.

10. Review and revision

- 10.1 Language policymaking and implementation are dynamic processes.
- 10.2 In this regard, the DVC: Academic fulfils the following duties:
- 10.2.1 Facilitates the testing of the Language Policy against changing circumstances through research on the implementation, monitoring and impact of the Policy.
 - 10.2.2 Facilitates regular consultation with the broader SU community about matters concerning the Language Policy.
 - 10.2.3 Publishes information gained from research and consultations as per 10.2.1 and 10.2.2.
 - 10.2.4 Initiates a review of the Language Policy at the DVC's discretion and oversees such a process with a view to possible amendment or replacement of the Policy.
- 10.3 The Language Policy must be reviewed during its sixth year of operation. It may be reviewed earlier, or more than once during this period, should the Policy owner consider it necessary.

11. Disclosure

The Language Policy is a public document, published on the University's website.

12. Related and supporting documents

No.	Document name	Status
1.	Conceptual Framework Document for Academic Literacies at Stellenbosch University, 2020	Institutional framework adopted by the Committee for Learning and Teaching on 17 September 2020
2.	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996	Adopted on 8 May 1996 and amended on 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly
3.	Disability Access Policy, 2018	Institutional policy approved by SU Council on 26 March 2018
4.	Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, as amended	First published in <i>Government Gazette</i> no. 18515 on 19 December 1997
5.	Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020)	Published in <i>Government Gazette</i> no. 43860 on 30 October 2020
6.	Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000	Published in <i>Government Gazette</i> no. 20876 on 9 February 2000
7.	Use of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012	Published in <i>Government Gazette</i> no. 35742 on 2 October 2012
8.	SU Regulation: Language Committee of Council (2016)	Approved by Council on 26 September 2016
9.	SU Mandate of the Language Planning and Management Advisory Committee	To be drafted if such committee is appointed
10.	Visual Redress Policy Transformation Policy Social Impact Policy Teaching-Learning (T-L) Policy (2025) Assessment Policy Employment Equity Policy Admissions Policy Stellenbosch University Profile of a Graduate: 20 September 2023	

Addendum A: Glossary of terms and abbreviations

This glossary is an addendum to the Language Policy and may be updated with the most relevant language-related terminology and abbreviations used at Stellenbosch University, with approval by the Academic Planning Committee.

Note: Text in bold in the right-hand column indicates another term that is defined in this list.

Term/abbreviation	Full form/definition
Academic Affairs Council (AAC)	A student leadership structure formed by the elected class representatives from each faculty.
academic literacies	The discourse competences required for success in higher education in textual, digital, visual, gestural, numerical and other modes of communication specific to as well as across different disciplines. A person who is competent in the academic literacies of a discipline has academic language proficiency in that discipline.
Academic Planning Committee (APC)	A standing sub-committee of Senate.
academic language proficiency	See 'academic literacies'.
epistemic/epistemological access	The result of a successful process of knowledge acquisition, creation and dissemination by means of enabling learning and teaching pedagogies.
ICT	The abbreviation for 'information communications technology'.
indigenous languages	As defined in the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020) , "[l]anguages that have their heritage roots in Africa (also referred to as African languages in literature and some policy documents) and that belong to the Southern Bantu language family, where 'Bantu' is used purely as a linguistic term." ¹
interpreting	An activity that aims to transfer spoken or signed meaning accurately from one language to another in a specific situational or institutional context. In educational contexts, spoken and/or signed interpreting are usually performed in the simultaneous mode (on-site in real time, monitoring output while maintaining a short time lag between the original and interpreted messages) and utilising discipline-

¹ SU supports the view that Afrikaans and the Khoi, Nama and San languages are indigenous languages.

	specific terminology. Simultaneous interpreting may take place on-site, with the interpreters present in class, or online – with the interpreters and/or several or all of the participants in the interpreted lecture located off-site. The aim of educational interpreting is to facilitate academic access and success in a pedagogically sound, multilingual learning environment. 'Simultaneous' indicates that the interpretation takes place in real time or live.
IT	The abbreviation for 'information technology'.
LPM Advisory Committee	The abbreviation for 'Language Planning and Management Advisory Committee'.
multilingualism	<p>The use of more than one language for a variety of purposes, at different levels of proficiency.</p> <p>Individual multilingualism (also called plurilingualism) refers to a person's repertoire of language use (for example, using Sesotho for basic conversation in service encounters, English for academic studies, and isiXhosa for communication in the family).</p> <p>In literature on multilingualism, societal multilingualism refers to formal language arrangements (or policies) in communities where speakers of different languages coexist. Societal multilingualism does not necessarily imply individual multilingualism.</p> <p>Institutional multilingualism is a type of societal multilingualism – as reflected in the activities and policies of an organisation – and does not necessarily imply individual multilingualism. Multilingualism also denotes an attitude, and therefore includes an appreciation of diversity.</p>
NQF	The abbreviation for 'National Qualifications Framework'.
official internal institutional communication	All communication from the Chancellor, Council, Senate, the Rector, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Chief Operating Officer or the Registrar directed to the entire University.
pedagogical need	Learning contexts and opportunities that enable epistemological access (to knowledge), facilitate diverse learning preferences, promote active engagement, provide the means for achieving cognition and understanding, and advance the construction of robust identities (as knowers).
pedagogically sound	Facilitating learning by being responsive to students' pedagogical need through the "application of authentic principles to the design of learning for higher education".

	These principles include "real-world relevance", "multiple perspectives", "collaborative construction of knowledge" and "authentic assessment" (Herrington & Herrington, 2006:1-14 ²).
plurilingualism	Individual multilingualism – the ability to use multiple languages and dialects in complementary ways.
postgraduate qualifications	Accredited programmes, registered on the NQF , for which the minimum admission requirements are an appropriate diploma at NQF level 6 or a bachelor's degree at NQF level 7 or higher, as specified by the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework. 'Postgraduate qualifications' include advanced diplomas, bachelor's honours degrees, postgraduate diplomas, master's degrees and doctoral degrees.
CSO	The abbreviation for 'Commuter Student Organisation'.
responsibility centre (RC)	A reporting-line structure that reports to a member of the Rectorate.
South African official languages	According to the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020), "the eleven official languages of South Africa as specified in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (namely Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and English)." In 2023, South African Sign Language (SASL) was added to the list of official South African languages, bringing the total to twelve.
student communities	Listening-living-learning environments to which all students belong, most notably those in SU residences, PSO communities and residential education clusters (the latter serving as an additional student community to which every student belongs). Membership affords students the opportunity to participate in committee structures, societies and sport clubs, and to enrol in co-curricular experiential learning activities.
SU	The abbreviation for 'Stellenbosch University'.
teaching, learning and assessment	Teaching, learning and assessment represents different facets of an integrated process where teaching academics and students are simultaneously involved in a single

² Herrington, A. & Herrington, J. (2006). What is an Authentic Learning Environment?. In T. Herrington & J. Herrington (Eds.), *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education*, pp. 1-14. IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59140-594-8.ch001>

	activity that calls for an "interactive interplay of minds in real contexts" (Ashwin, 2012: 2-3 ³ ; Dann, 2014: 151 ⁴).
translanguaging	An umbrella term for a context in which multilingual persons use the linguistic resources at their disposal to engage with one another and with texts to create meaning. In a classroom context, the purpose is to deepen learning using a variety of strategies – including (but not limited to) code switching, translation practices, co-languaging and interpreting – without any attempt to limit communication or engagement with text to one language or variety of a language.
translation	An activity that aims to transfer written meaning from one language to another in a specific situational or institutional context. The objective of professional translation is to ensure that both texts communicate a similar message, while taking into account the text's function, the grammar rules and writing conventions of both languages, idiomatic usage and the applicable terminology. The written nature of professional translations requires them to be well finished products. Translation, which involves transferring ideas expressed in writing from one language to another, is distinguished from interpreting, which involves transferring ideas expressed orally or through signing (as in the case of SASL).

³ Ashwin, Paul. (2012). *Analysing Teaching-Learning Interactions in Higher Education: Accounting for Structure and Agency*. London: Continuum.

⁴ Dann, R. (2014). Assessment as learning: blurring the boundaries of assessment and learning for theory, policy and practice, *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 21:2, pp. 149-166.