

## Language Policy of the University of the Free State

(Approved by the UFS Council on June 6, 2003)

### 1. Preamble

- 1.1 The language policy of the UFS respects, and is founded on, the UFS's vision and commitment to quality and equity, its mission as a university and an academic institution; its values; its socio-political, cultural and geographical environment; its statute and its legislative environment, as stipulated in the sections that follow.
- 1.2 The language policy acknowledges and takes into account the **constitutional, legislative, as well as the national policy and statutory context** of the UFS.
  - 1.2.1 The language policy of the UFS acknowledges and respects the stipulations and intentions of the Constitution that pertain to language diversity, as well as relevant higher education and other legislation. In particular, this policy subscribes to the constitutional stipulation that each person has the right to education in the official language or languages of his/her choice in public educational institutions, provided that such an education is reasonably practicable.
  - 1.2.2 The language policy of the UFS has taken into consideration the Government's Language Policy for Higher Education of November 2002, which includes, among others, the following stipulations:
    - that currently and in the foreseeable future, English and Afrikaans remain and will continue to serve as the dominant languages of instruction in higher education.
    - that a medium- to long-term strategy to promote multilingualism, with specific reference to the development of other South African languages for use in instruction, be accepted.
    - that strategies to promote skills in the designated language(s) of instruction be encouraged to prevent language from becoming an obstacle to equity, access and success.
    - that, as a language of *scholarship* and science, Afrikaans is a national resource; that retaining Afrikaans as a medium of academic expression and communication in higher education is supported fully by the Minister of Education, who is committed to ensuring that this capacity of Afrikaans is not eroded; and that responsibility for the sustained development of Afrikaans rests with all historically Afrikaans universities and not only some of them.
  - 1.2.3 The language policy of the UFS fully is in accordance with the national movement towards multilingualism and the recognition of language rights, as indicated by, inter alia, the announcement of the National Language Policy Framework in March 2003. The language policy also takes into account the 2003 guidelines of the Pan-South African Language Board (PANSALB) for higher education institutions.
  - 1.2.4 In terms of the nature and basis of the University, as articulated in its 1999 Statute, the University acknowledges its multicultural composition, respects the rights of any person not to be subjected to discrimination (on the basis of any of the listed or unlisted grounds in terms of section 9 of the Constitution), and acknowledges the right of each person to exercise a free choice of using either Afrikaans or English. Furthermore, it stipulates that education is offered in Afrikaans and English on a parallel-medium basis, while the need to promote Sesotho as a language of science is taken into account insofar as this is reasonably practicable.
- 1.3 The language policy of the UFS recognizes, is founded on, and is directed at the manifestation of the **intrinsic nature of a university** as a place of scientific practice and scholarship, establishing and requiring a specific context for language and communication.
  - 1.3.1 Language proficiency is therefore an integral part of various university activities such as teaching, learning, intellectual development, research, scientific analysis, academic discourse in the diversity of disciplinary communities, professional preparation and training, external liaison, as well as academic and administrative management.
  - 1.3.2 The various university activities require a variety of appropriate ways of managing language practices, language skills (general as well as advanced/analytical) and language development.

- 1.3.3 To be a good university requires that the requisite language skills of staff and students should be supported, developed and promoted continuously as an integral part of a university's activities, within the framework of financial sustainability.
- 1.4 The language policy of the UFS acknowledges, proceeds from, and is directed at pursuing the notion that intrinsically and in terms of its statute and composition, the University is a **multilingual and multicultural institution**, within a multilingual and multicultural country, region and province.
- 1.4.1 Multilingualism at the UFS is sought and promoted within the context of the two main languages, namely, Afrikaans and English, including, alongside these languages, specific space for phasing in and developing Sesotho (see clause 2.1 and 2.2.5).
- 1.4.2 Multilingualism is pursued and promoted within the larger context of a commitment to a non-racial, non-sexist, multicultural and multilingual institution.
- 1.4.3 This implies that language policy and language practice are key elements in recognizing, appreciating, managing and harmonizing diversity in a balanced way.
- 1.5 The language policy respects and promotes specific **values and principles**.
- 1.5.1 The language policy respects, proceeds from, and is directed at pursuing the UFS's values of academic freedom and autonomy, equity, integrity, excellence and a service orientation.
- 1.5.2 In the specific context of diversity where multiculturalism and multilingualism are promoted, the UFS is directed by the following principles in its language policy and its application:
- non-marginalisation;
  - non-discrimination;
  - equity;
  - empowerment;
  - co-operation;
  - human dignity and respect (including mutual respect for and an appreciation of differences, traditions and preferences); and
  - a culture of sensitivity, politeness, an accommodating attitude and tolerance (in contrast to entitlement).
- 1.6 The language policy takes into account and recognises the **historical context** of the UFS's language practices.
- 1.6.1 The current language policy of the UFS emanates from the institution's accepting a parallel-medium language policy in 1994. This was preceded, from the establishment of this institution in 1904, by various phases of unilingualism (initially English, in later phases exclusively Afrikaans) and bilingualism in various forms.
- 1.6.2 In developing and phasing in the policy of parallel-medium after 1994, significant modifications have been made to the administrative and academic functioning of the university, while significant time and human as well as financial resources have been spent on this endeavour. Huge demands have been made on staff with respect to their developing functional bi- or multi-lingualism.
- 1.6.3 The parallel-medium policy dramatically improved the accessibility of the UFS to, especially, black students who had previously largely been excluded from higher education. In the recent past, significant progress has also been made with extending translation and interpreting services as well as practical multilingualism in meetings and public events.
- 1.6.4 Indeed, the UFS has already made significant progress with transforming its language environment and extending bilingualism in academic as well as management contexts, in the interest of dealing with diversity in ways that display harmony and balance.
- 1.6.5 However, given the historical context and numerous constraints on the rate of the phasing-in process, existing language practices do not in all contexts facilitate the optimal functioning of and interaction among staff and students in a multilingual and multicultural environment, especially given a changing staff composition, employment equity, and restructuring in higher education. Many non-Afrikaans speakers continue to experience a significant level of exclusion and marginalisation as a result of language.

- 1.6.6 This historical situation, but especially the UFS's commitment to multilingualism, requires that the institution further develop and refine its language policy and practices in line with the various contexts that have been outlined above, and that are further specified below.
- 1.7 The language policy of the UFS must be understood and executed in conjunction and in balance with other policy objectives and policy documents of the UFS, in particular those that pertain to diversity and employment equity, and in ways that do not compromise the intrinsic multilingual character of the University.
- 1.8 The points of departure, principles and values referred to above, and the objectives below, must guide all interpretations, applications, and extensions of this policy.
- 1.9 If deemed desirable, a language manual with more specific guidelines and arrangements may be developed and made available, in conjunction with a language plan.

## **2. Main languages and objectives**

- 2.1 The main languages of the UFS are Afrikaans and English.
- 2.2 Within the broad aims and orientation expressed in the Preamble, as well as the specification of main languages above, in its language policy the UFS specifically wishes:
  - 2.2.1 to assist, in concrete terms, in establishing, developing and fostering institutionalised functional multilingualism and respect for language rights in higher education at the UFS;
  - 2.2.2 to improve equity, access and success in higher education in the Free State and central regions;
  - 2.2.3 to manage language proficiency in the main languages as a strategic priority;
  - 2.2.4 to develop Afrikaans as an academic and scientific language;
  - 2.2.5 to promote and support the development and frequency of use of Sesotho as a scientific language - as a South African language of the Free State - in higher education in the medium and long term;
  - 2.2.6 to contribute to creating a culture of language and cultural tolerance as well as an accommodating attitude, as stipulated more closely in the values above;
  - 2.2.7 to maintain and stimulate study and research in South African languages and literatures of the Free State.
  - 2.2.8 to promote the study of selected foreign and other South African languages (including South African Sign Language) in its language programmes; and
  - 2.2.9 to promote the quality of multilingual practices, among others, by means of quality assurance directed at written and spoken communication, as well as interpreting and translation services.
- 2.3 The UFS sets out to achieve these objectives by arranging practices with respect to languages and multilingualism, in cost-effective ways, in a purposeful manner, and by phasing in measures where necessary.
- 2.4 The UFS fosters and promotes multilingualism and multiculturalism by means of appropriate utilisation and allocation of various resources (human, physical, information-technology, equipment) and by making reasonable provision in its budget for the efficient and cost-effective implementation of the language policy, subject to the norm of affordability and financial sustainability.

## **3. Arrangements with respect to official domains of language use**

The UFS commits itself to the following stipulations that govern its official domains of language use.

### **3.1 Teaching**

- 3.1.1 The UFS maintains a system of parallel-medium teaching in Afrikaans and English.
- 3.1.2 The additional use of Sesotho in teaching situations, where there is a need and this is reasonably practicable, is encouraged.
- 3.1.3 For purposes of parallel-medium teaching:

- 3.1.3.1 contact lectures are offered in a parallel system involving Afrikaans and English:
  - 3.1.3.2 *practical classes* may be offered, on the basis of special circumstances or needs, on a double-medium basis, subject to approval by the Executive Management;
  - 3.1.3.3 selected postgraduate modules or courses may be offered, on the basis of exceptional circumstances, in only one of the two main languages or on a double-medium basis, subject to consensus being reached after thorough consultation with the students involved, subject to approval by the Executive Management, and provided that the number of such cases do not compromise the basic practice of parallel-medium in teaching;
  - 3.1.3.4 for the sake of promoting multicultural learning situations and intercultural academic debate, special academic discussion situations may be dealt with by means of appropriate language arrangements such as simultaneous interpreting services or double medium, subject to approval by the Executive Management, and provided that the number of such cases do not compromise the basic practice of parallel-medium in teaching;
  - 3.1.3.5 in exceptional circumstances, where the need arises and this is reasonably practicable, specific modules or courses may be facilitated by means of simultaneous interpreting services or appropriate measures (including South African Sign Language), subject to approval by the Executive Management;
  - 3.1.3.6 other teaching and learning situations with specific language requirements (including the presence of deaf, partially sighted or blind persons) are dealt with in flexible and sensitive ways that are consistent with the spirit, framework, objectives and values of the language policy, subject to approval by the Executive Management.
- 3.1.4 To support the parallel-medium policy, the following practices are adopted:
- 3.1.4.1 course information and course guides are made available in both Afrikaans and English;
  - 3.1.4.2 self-generated learning material is produced by the lecturer involved in both Afrikaans and English;
  - 3.1.4.3 assessment is performed in Afrikaans or English, following student preference.
- 3.1.5 Textbook-based electronic support material (such as an electronic item bank) or electronic assessment instruments and software only available in English, may be used in the Afrikaans track, but not for primary assessment opportunities such as tests and examinations (unless special permission is granted by the Executive Management in exceptional cases).
- 3.1.6 Teaching programmes with exceptional requirements and objectives (such as internet-based distance-education programmes or programmes in other countries) may be offered in only one of the two main languages (learning material and assessment included), subject to approval by Council.
- 3.1.7 While refinements of this policy are awaited that take into account the situation obtaining at other points of delivery and on incorporated campuses of the UFS (such as the Qwaqwa campus), such points of delivery may, subject to approval by Council, exclusively use English in teaching.

## **3.2 Research**

- 3.2.1 The language of the research environment is managed in ways that promote the objectives in section 2, within the spirit, framework and values of the language policy, and within the context of the institution's commitment and sensitivity to multilingualism and diversity.
- 3.2.2 The UFS encourages research in the main languages, and supports such outputs by providing appropriate translation and interpreting services.
- 3.2.3 The language of research publications at the UFS is co-determined by requirements of scientific publications and/or contracts.

## **3.3 Community Service**

- 3.3.1 The language of community service is managed in ways that promote objectives in section 2, within the spirit, framework and values of the language policy, and within the context of the commitment to and sensitivity for multilingualism and diversity.

3.3.2 Where necessary and as far as possible, professional translation and interpreting services and related measures, are used, in conjunction with appropriate quality assurance measures.

### **3.4 Management, administration, and operations in faculties and support services**

3.4.1 The language of management and administration is dealt with in ways that promote language accessibility and the objectives in section 2, in the context of the commitment to and sensitivity for multilingualism and diversity.

3.4.2 English is used as a language of management alongside Afrikaans, and is phased in where this is not yet the case.

3.4.3 The additional use of Sesotho, where desirable and reasonably practicable, is encouraged.

3.4.4 While refinements of this policy are awaited that take into account the situation obtaining at other points of delivery and on incorporated campuses of the UFS (such as the Qwaqwa campus), these campuses may deal with internal management and administration primarily in English.

3.4.5 Where necessary and as far as is possible, professional translation and interpreting services and related language facilitation measures, are used to facilitate communication.

#### **3.4.6 Internal and external spoken communication**

3.4.6.1 At official events, such as graduation ceremonies, office-bearers of the UFS should alternate between Afrikaans and English, except where circumstances dictate otherwise. Sesotho can be used to supplement these, if possible and desirable. Appropriate language facilitation services may be used to facilitate communication.

3.4.6.2 Where practicable, and depending on the language composition of meetings, these official meetings are to be handled in both the main languages: Council, Senate, Executive Management, Executive Committee, Faculty Boards, Departments, Student Representative Council, and the Institutional Forum. Appropriate language facilitation services can be used. Where the composition of specific meetings makes this necessary, Sesotho may also be used.

3.4.6.3 Chairpersons and members of meetings should consciously pursue a situation where members' language skills will be dealt with accommodatingly, respecting the values stated above, as well as the objective of multilingualism.

3.4.6.4 Telephonic and personal enquiries by students and other members of the public, as well as service rendering by staff, are dealt with in Afrikaans or English, or, where necessary and possible, in Sesotho. Appropriate language facilitation services may be used, together with training of front and contact staff to provide a multilingual response to these enquiries.

3.4.6.5 Job interviews are conducted in both main languages, except where a candidate expresses a preference for one of the main languages, on the basis of the intrinsic language requirements of each particular post, in a way that does not unfairly disadvantage any particular candidate, and in accordance with the UFS's policy with respect to employment equity and related matters.

3.4.6.6 Performance assessment takes place in Afrikaans or English, following the preference of the candidate. If necessary, Sesotho may be used, supported by an interpreting service.

3.4.6.7 Staff training and capacity development take place in both the main languages, unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise.

3.4.6.8 Disciplinary hearings take place in one or both of the main languages, with a sensitivity shown for the language skills and preferences of the persons who are subject to the hearing, as well as sensitivity to the fact that an interpreting services may be needed so that parties may fully understand proceedings and defend themselves to the best of their ability.

3.4.6.9 Job-related spoken communication between two staff members, where other staff members are present or otherwise (e.g. electronically) part of the communication, is conducted in one or both of the main languages so that no interested party is excluded.

3.4.6.10 In spoken external communication, the language of the target audience determines the choice of one or both of the main languages or Sesotho.

- 3.4.6.11 Public lectures, inaugural lectures, et cetera should be arranged in such a manner that both main languages are used at the event. The choice of using one or both the main languages in the lecture is left to the speaker, suitably supported by audiovisual material and by language facilitation or interpreting where necessary.

#### 3.4.7 Internal written communication

- 3.4.7.1 Agendas and minutes are drawn up in the language or languages of the meeting. (See clauses 3.4.6.2 and 3.4.6.3 above.)
- 3.4.7.2 Addenda for meetings are drawn up in the language or languages of the meeting or otherwise in the main language preferred by the compiler, provided that, if required, a translation or summary in the alternative main language will be made available as soon as is reasonably possible.
- 3.4.7.3 Policy documents are made available in full in Afrikaans as well as in English.
- 3.4.7.4 Formal internal items of correspondence (e.g. circulars, notices and information brochures) are drawn up, as far as possible, in both Afrikaans and English, unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise.
- 3.4.7.5 Conditions of service and proforma documentation such as payslips and IRP 5 documents are made available, according to the language preferences of employees, in either Afrikaans or English.
- 3.4.7.6 Any other internal documents are provided in both Afrikaans and English, as far as possible, utilising the following guideline: the more important it is that members of staff must understand a particular document correctly (in other words, the greater the risk of incorrect understanding), the more important it becomes to have the document available in both main languages.
- 3.4.7.7 On official internal documentation that is not made available immediately in both languages, it is to be indicated, as far as possible, that the text will be made available, on request, in the other language within a reasonable time.
- 3.4.7.8 Health and safety measures are made available, as far as possible, in both Afrikaans and English, as well as Sesotho where desirable.
- 3.4.7.9 Internal publications use both main languages to reflect multilingualism at the UFS in a balanced way, unless circumstances or the target audience dictate otherwise.
- 3.4.7.10 Internal invitations to university functions are issued in both Afrikaans and English, as well as Sesotho where desirable.
- 3.4.7.11 Informal internal correspondence is conducted in the language of preference of those involved, provided that, where required, a translation or summary is made available in the alternative language.
- 3.4.7.12 Signs on campus are prepared in both main languages, as well as in Sesotho where desirable.

#### 3.4.8 External written communication

- 3.4.8.1 Correspondence with the public is conducted in either Afrikaans or English, depending on the language in which the correspondence was received. Where necessary and possible, Sesotho can be used.
- 3.4.8.2 Official international correspondence is conducted in English.
- 3.4.8.3 External invitations to university functions are sent out in both main languages, as well as in Sesotho where desirable.
- 3.4.8.4 Official notices and advertisements are published, as far as possible, in both main languages, taking into consideration the language preferences of the particular publication and the target audience.
- 3.4.8.5 External publications use both main languages to reflect the multilingualism of the UFS in a balanced way, unless circumstances or the target audience dictate otherwise.

### 3.4.9 Official statements to students, academic records, degree and diploma certificates

- 3.4.9.1 Official statements and study records issued to students (excluding records prior to the introduction of parallel-medium teaching) are dealt with in Afrikaans or English, depending on the preference of the student.
- 3.4.9.2 The wording on degree and diploma certificates appears fully in both Afrikaans and English on the same document, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise.
- 3.4.10 The name of the university on all official documents, letterheads and visiting-cards is indicated in Afrikaans, English and Sesotho.
- 3.4.11 The university's internet web pages are compiled in Afrikaans and English, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.
- 3.4.12 The language policy of the UFS must also be reflected appropriately in its corporate identity, marketing and advertising material, as well as liaison material.
- 3.4.13 Other management and administrative situations with specific language requirements (including the presence of deaf, partially sighted or blind persons) are dealt with in ways that are flexible and sensitive within the spirit, framework, objectives and values of the language policy.

## **4. Arrangements with respect to inclusive language use**

- 4.1 UFS office-bearers, staff and students avoid language use that is discriminatory or humiliating in nature, in particular as far as gender, race, disability and minority status are concerned.

## **5. Language strategy**

- 5.1 To be able to realise its language policy, and subject to the affordability norm in clause 2.4, the UFS commits itself to:
  - 5.1.1 a fair practice of language testing for all new first-year students in order to determine these students' needs with regard to improving their academic language proficiency in one or both of the UFS's main languages of instruction;
  - 5.1.2 present language proficiency courses in the UFS's languages of instruction to students who do not achieve the desired standard in the said language testing, provided that in no way there will be unfair discrimination against the students involved;
  - 5.1.3 create an empowering environment for the development of staff's language skills and multilingualism, by means of, among others:
    - 5.1.3.1 presenting appropriate language proficiency courses in the main languages as an integral part of the standard orientation and staff development programmes of current and new staff, especially where a person is proficient in only one of the main languages, and insofar as this intervention is practicable and affordable for the institution;
    - 5.1.3.2 making available professional language proficiency courses in Sesotho to personnel, insofar as this is practicable and affordable for the institution;
  - 5.1.4 recognise multilingualism with respect to the main languages as a positive attribute when selection criteria are applied in making personnel appointments, within the stipulations of the UFS's policy with respect to employment equity as well as the appropriate legislation, and specifically in a way that does not impose any unfair obstacle to appointment (see also clause 5.3);
  - 5.1.5 perform regular language needs analyses by means of language audits and other appropriate methods, so that informed adjustments can be made to the language policy, where and if required;
  - 5.1.6 institute and phase in appropriate, affordable and effective multilingual support services, procedures and technology for the different domains; and
  - 5.1.7 support the Southern Sotho Lexicographic Unit of the Pan-South African Language Board at the UFS.

- 5.2 The UFS will institute any measures that are required effectively to implement its language policy, subject to the provisions of clause 2.4.
- 5.3 The appropriate role of language proficiency considerations in appointing staff is regulated by the UFS's policy with regard to employment equity and the inherent requirements of a post, within the relevant stipulations of the Constitution and other relevant legislation.

#### **6. Line managers, language committee and ombudsman**

- 6.1 Each academic and administrative line manager and manager at the UFS is responsible for implementing the language policy, as well as supervising the process.
- 6.2 The UFS Language Committee functions as an advisory committee on language policy for the Office of Diversity and Equity, the Institutional Forum, Executive Management, Senate and Council. The Committee is constituted inclusively, consisting of members from the latter bodies, as stipulated in its Constitution.
- 6.3 The UFS language committee may request or initiate language audits or investigations into language matters on campus.
- 6.4 The UFS Language Committee reports annually, in an appropriate way, to Executive Management, Senate and Council on the state of language-policy matters on the campuses of the University.
- 6.5 An ombudsman may be instituted by the Council to assist in dealing with complaints and conflict, and/or playing a monitoring role.
- 6.6 The various roles of the language committee, ombudsman, line managers and the Director: Diversity and Equity must be stipulated.

#### **7. Complaints and recourse**

- 7.1 Any member of staff or student at the UFS may submit any complaints, questions or evidence with respect to the implementation of this language policy, without fear of reprisal, to any appropriate line manager or the Language Committee, or an independent body or person (e.g. the Director: Diversity and Equity or an ombudsman) who will be nominated for this purpose by the Council, or otherwise by the Rector or the Chairperson of the Council.

#### **8. Amendments and interpretation**

- 8.1 Since multilingualism is a critical and constitutive element of the nature and basis of the University of the Free State, amendments to this policy that imply substantive changes to its objectives, the main languages, parallel-medium teaching and the multilingual system in management and administration, are subject to approval by a two-thirds majority of the Senate, Executive Management and Council.
- 8.2 In case of any dispute over the interpretation of clauses in this policy, be these in Afrikaans or English, the Afrikaans formulations of the policy are decisive.

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