



University of the Free State

Language Policyⁱ

1. Preamble

The University of the Free State (UFS) is committed to:

- Enabling a language-rich environment committed to multilingualism with particular attention to English, Afrikaans, Sesotho and isiZulu and, other languages represented on the three campuses.
- Ensuring that language is not a barrier to equity of access, opportunity and success in academic programmes or in access to the UFS administration.
- Promoting the provision of academic literacy, especially in English, for all undergraduate students.
- Ensuring that language is not used or perceived as a tool for social exclusion of staff and/or students on any of its campuses.
- Promoting a pragmatic learning and administrative environment committed to and accommodative of linguistic diversity within the regional, national and international environments in which the UFS operates.
- Contributing to the development of Sesotho and isiZulu as higher education languages within the context of the needs of the UFS different campuses.
- The continuous development of Afrikaans as an academic language.
- Recognising and promoting South African Sign Language and Braille.

2. Principles

The following principles inform the adoption of this policy:

- Diversity, equity, redress, reconciliation and social justice.
- Practicability, cost effectiveness and justifiability.
- Support for academic literacy development at undergraduate level.
- Support for the development of multilingualism.
- Language as a resource for the university to achieve individual development and integration.
- Flexibility and inclusivity.

3. Definitions

Academic literacy: the ability to demonstrate membership of an academic (disciplinary) community by reading, writing and thinking in ways that are congruent with the values and attitudes of that community. It is the responsibility of the institution to induct students into discipline-specific language and language register and to foster intellectual discipline in that register. In South Africa's current context, academic literacy and multilingualism are connected in that the diverse linguistic repertoire of the students is

recognised and acknowledged so as to provide the best possible environment to strengthen development and proficiency in the language needed for career and academic advancement.

Multilingualism: a linguistic capacity that extends across more than two languages. Multilingualism can be individual, i.e. a person who can use more than one but preferably more than two languages; and social multilingualism, that is the use of more than one but preferably more than two languages in social transactions in a given community. In the case of the UFS, multilingualism means the use of a combination of Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, and Sesotho for different purposes according to each campus needs.

Professional programmes: programmes that prepare students for the practice of a profession such as nursing, teaching, law, accounting, and medicine.

Parallel medium: is the use of two languages to teach the same content according to the preference of the student. Teaching takes place in separate classes and may be done by the same or different lecturers, depending on resources and schedules.

Expanded tutorial system: this refers to smaller groups meetings that take place in designated modules and use a specific pedagogy to support students in the acquisition of academic literacy relevant to their professional or scientific fields of choice. Tutorials will be conducted simultaneously in English, Afrikaans and a third language.

4. Policy statement

Bearing in mind the above commitments, principles and definitions the following policy is accepted:

- 4.1 English becomes the primary medium of instruction at undergraduate and postgraduate level on all three campuses.
- 4.2 Multilingualism is supported among other activities by an expanded tutorial system especially designed for first-year students. Tutorials take place in English, Afrikaans and Sesotho in the same class on the Bloemfontein Campus and in English, Sesotho and isiZulu on the Qwaqwa Campus.
- 4.3 In particular professional programmes such as teacher education and the training of students in Theology who wish to enter the ministry in traditional Afrikaans-speaking churches, where there is clear market need, the parallel medium English-Afrikaans and Sesotho/isiZulu continues. This arrangement must not undermine the values of inclusivity and diversity endorsed by the UFS.
- 4.4 The primary formal language of the UFS administration will be English with sufficient flexibility for the eventual practice of multilingualism across the UFS.
- 4.5 Formal student life interactions should be in English, while multilingualism is encouraged in all social interactions.

5. Implementation

5.1 Undergraduate teaching and learning

- 5.1.1 Lectures, study materials, examinations and related material will be in English.

- 5.1.2 Multilingual study resources will be provided in the context of tutorials in order to support epistemological access for all students.
- 5.1.3 Faculties offering professional programmes in languages other than English and that have a clear niche market will continue to be offered in those languages (see 4.3). These programmes will be clearly identified in publicity material and in faculty year books.
- 5.1.4 Faculties will have to submit to the Academic Planning Committee of Senate and the Executive Committee of Senate those programmes that will be offered in languages other than English according to the cycle of production of year books.
- 5.1.5 Undergraduate programmes offered in English will include as part of their contact time at first- and second-year level tutorials in Afrikaans, English, and Sesotho/isiZulu depending on the campus needs.
- 5.1.6. Staff-student consultation and any academic transaction that happens outside the lecture hall takes place in a language negotiated between staff and students provided such arrangements do not undermine the principles underlying the UFS language policy.
- 5.1.7. The UFS will put in place the necessary support for academic staff to enhance or develop their linguistic abilities in all the languages of teaching and learning at the UFS.
- 5.1.8 South African Sign Language and Braille will continue to be supported by the UFS within budgetary and feasibility constraints.

5.2 Postgraduate education

- 5.2.1 The language for the writing of theses and dissertations at the UFS is English except in disciplines where languages other than English are taught as subjects of study.
- 5.2.2. Specific cases for the use of languages other than English in theses and dissertations is left to the discretion of the head of department and the dean who are accountable for the implementation of this language policy and for the compliance with the academic rules of the UFS regarding external examination of PhD theses.

5.3 Certificates and academic records

- 5.3.1 All certificates, diplomas and academic records of the UFS will be kept in English.

5.4 University administration

- 5.4.1 The language of the UFS in all its official meetings is English. Minutes of all official meetings will be kept in English. At those occasions, including certain meetings, in which good communication so requires, the UFS will make use of interpreting services.
- 5.4.2 Service to the public as far as possible should be conducted in the

language of the person being served.

- 5.4.3 The UFS website will be in English, except in those cases in which the information contained pertains to Afrikaans/Sesotho/isiZulu language matters or to courses offered in Afrikaans/Sesotho/isiZulu.
- 5.4.5 Marketing and publicity material will be mainly in English but should portray the multilingual commitment of the UFS. The appropriate language for the target market will be used especially in the case of academic programmes.
- 5.4.6 Signage will be mainly in English with consideration given to the language diversity of each campus and the need to develop a multilingual university.

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1 The Vice-Rector: Academic is responsible for the overall implementation of the Language Policy across the entire UFS.
- 6.2 The campus principal, deans and assistant deans are responsible for the implementation of the Language Policy at campus/faculty level.
- 6.3 The Registrar: Governance and Policy is responsible for the implementation of the policy in relation to the UFS administration.

7. Monitoring and revision

7.1. The Language Committee of the University Management Committee is responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the UFS Language Policy. Its membership is as follows:

- Vice-Rector: Academic (chairperson);
- One academic representative South Campus;
- One academic representative Qwaqwa campus;
- One representative of the Unit for Language Development of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL);
- One representative from Senate;
- Four faculty representatives not in Senate;
- A member of the SRC (Bloemfontein)
- A member of the SRC (Qwaqwa);
- Union representatives one per union (observer status).

7.2 The Language Committee will report annually on implementation and make recommendations to ensure the reasonable embedding of the policy into UFS policies, programmes and institutional culture.

8. Transitional arrangements

8.1 The Language Committee in consultation with the faculties and the CTL will approve a phased implementation plan for the language policy starting in 2017.

8.2. The Vice-Rector: Academic, through the Unit for Language Development of the CTL, will be responsible for the development and implementation of a language development plan for the UFS 2016-2021.

ⁱ The UFS would like to thank the following universities whose language policies helped in moulding our own:
Rhodes University, University of Pretoria and Central University of Technology.