

Media Statement: 20 June 2025

With this, the Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French at the UFS wishes to contextualize the perception that the days of Afrikaans at the University of the Free State are numbered. This statement aligns with the university's official statement, as reported on 18 June, among others, by *Netwerk24*.

The content of the UFS language policy and language implementation plan (as available on the University of the Free State's website) clearly states that “multilingualism” and “translanguaging”—and thus by implication also Afrikaans—have a place at the UFS. It is within this language policy that the department operates (*language-policy-of-the-university-of-the-free-state.pdf*).

The email from Prof. Rhoda, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academics, must be read in the context of a response to a visit by the parliamentary committee on higher education during which student leaders complained that contrary to the language policy Afrikaans still took place. However, the tone of her email to deans and the content of media reports about it since 13 June 2025 may create the impression that Afrikaans is entirely unwelcome at the UFS. This is not true and is in direct contradiction to the core value of multilingualism embodied in Vision130's focus on diversity and inclusivity. (<https://www.ufs.ac.za/vision-130/tenets-of-vision-130/social-justice>)

Initiatives such as the new street poetry project at the University of the Free State, which creates space for poems in four languages—Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, and Sesotho; the establishment of the Academy for Multilingualism in 2021; the tangible support from the UFS rectorate for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Afrikaans as an official language on 15 May 2025 (<https://livestream.ufs.ac.za/>); the university's support of “translanguaging” initiatives in various departments (which specifically allow students to use their home/first languages in service of academic achievement); and the establishment and success of conversational language modules in various faculties—including Afrikaans, Sign Language, Sesotho, and isiZulu—all point to a multilingual environment in which Afrikaans is an integral part.

With this statement, the Department therefore seeks to allay the concerns of the broader Afrikaans language community. We take note of the single email by Prof. Anthea Rhoda to the deans, as reflected in media reports from June 2025. However, the content of the reports and the email do not reflect the reality of Afrikaans in a multilingual UFS context, where Afrikaans speakers can—and should—also rightly feel welcome.