



UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO LANGUAGE POLICY

2021

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO LANGUAGE POLICY

Policy Title	University of Limpopo Language Policy
Policy No	
Approved by	Council
Effective Date	January 2022
Amendment Date	2021
Custodian	Registrar
Operational Manager responsible for the implementation	Director: Quality Assurance
Executive Manager Responsible	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)
Date approved	26 November 2021

TABLE OF ACRONYMS

ACRONYMS	DEFINITION
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
L1	First language
LoTL	Language of Teaching and Learning
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UL	University of Limpopo

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

TERMS	DEFINITION
Additive multilingualism	A situation in which a language is learned in addition to a speaker's s primary language.
Collaborative partnerships	The co-operation of two or more people or institutions in accomplishing a particular goal.
Intellectualisation of languages	A process whereby a language 'can be used for educating a person in any field of knowledge from kindergarten to the University and beyond' (Sibayan in Prah, 2017:216).
Higher Education institution	Any institution that offers post-matric education and is declared as a public higher education institution in terms of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 Of 1997).
Language	The fundamental method of human communication comprising words expressed through speech, writing, or gesture.
Language equity	The fairness of language provision and/or treatment of two or more languages. Matters such as the number of speakers and the status of a language may influence policy to determine the domains of use of a particular language. This use may not necessarily be equal.
Language equality	In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), all languages are to receive equal respect. It refers to the equal treatment of two or more languages, especially with regard to official domains of society such as legislation, justice, public administration and instruction.
Language of scholarship	A language utilised in an academic situation for knowledge creation and dissemination.
Language of Teaching and	A language used to teach students in an educational

Learning	context.
Medium of instruction	A language used in teaching and learning.
Multilingualism	The ability of an individual or a community to communicate effectively in many languages.
Official South African languages	The eleven (11) official languages of South Africa as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).
Scholarly discourse	Academic discourse is the specific style of communication used in the academic world. Academic discourse involves how we alter our communication when engaged in academic discussions. Some examples of academic communication are textbooks, presentations, dissertations, research articles, and lectures.
Signage	The use of signs or a system to show information about something (such as a business or a road).
Sign language	Sign language is a means of communication expressed through bodily movements (especially of the hands and arms as well as facial expressions).

1. INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

The revised University of Limpopo (UL) Language Policy outlined herein is necessitated by the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions determined in terms of Section 27(2) of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 as amended. This amendment was published as Number 1160 of 30 October 2020. The purpose of the Language Policy Framework is to provide a framework for the development and promotion of indigenous languages as languages of teaching and learning, research, community engagement, scholarship and communication at South African public higher education institutions, in particular, universities. The Policy Framework therefore seeks to address numerous identified challenges and it replaces the *Language Policy for Higher Education (2002)*.

The revised UL Language Policy is premised on all critical areas of the Policy Framework and includes sections 6, 29 and 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). These include:

- a) The language used as the main medium instruction at the UL bearing in mind the fundamental right of persons to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public education institutions and associated constraints where applicable;
- b) The language or languages of official communication within higher education institutions;
- c) The role of higher education in promoting, and creating conditions for the development of historically marginalised official South African languages, as well as Sign Language;
- d) The right of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution where the language Policy of the University allows it;
- e) The role of higher education in preparing sufficient language teachers, researchers, interpreters, translators and other

language practitioners, to serve the needs of a diverse South Africa's multilingual society.

In terms of the current Language Policy, UL uses English as the medium of instruction except in African languages programmes and modules and one programme (Contemporary English Language Studies and Multilingual Studies) that teaches in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. This was the case even after the 2005 Ministerial Committee Report recommended that African languages be developed into languages of learning and teaching in tertiary institutions. The 2008 Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions also highlighted the need for the development and promotion of African languages at universities. In 2010 the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) established the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the Development of African Languages in Higher Education. Its report recommended a review of the then current policy for higher education for intellectualising indigenous official languages for use as academic languages. The revised Policy Framework replaces the 2002 Language Policy for Higher Education. The Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020) provides that Universities as centres of scholarship should play a critical role in the development of indigenous African languages. Therefore, African languages departments, as primary custodians of scholarship in these languages, should be supported in terms of resources.

The scope of application for this Policy will be limited to media of instruction and communication across the entire University.

2. AIMS OF POLICY

2.1 To uphold the legislative provision of multilingualism as defined and

laid out in section 6(1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996), the *Language Policy and Plan for South Africa* (2000), the *National Language Policy Framework* (2002), and the Ministerial Committee's Report on the *Development of Indigenous African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education* (2005), Report on the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (2008) and the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* (2020).

- 2.2 To guide the University in finding ways through which its Official African languages (that is, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Tshivenda and Xitsonga) can be intellectualised for use in learning and teaching, research, community engagement and scholarship in general.
- 2.3 To facilitate access to knowledge, information and service on and out of the Institution through the promotion, teaching and learning and research of these official languages in the Province, and in South Africa as a whole.
- 2.4 To prioritise the Official African languages in particular those predominantly used in the Province due to limited resources for the development of scholarly discourse as well as official communication in the University.
- 2.5 To encourage research and publications in multilingualism as a learning area and to promote the learning and use of indigenous languages in the Province and beyond.
- 2.6 To recognise and respect all other languages used in the Institution.

- 2.7 To comply with and implement provisions of the 2020 Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions which states:

All institutions must develop strategies, policies and implementation plans for promoting multilingualism as defined by this policy framework. Such plans must indicate at least two official languages, other than the medium of instruction or language of teaching and learning, for development for scholarly discourse as well as official communication (RSA, 2020: p.14 no 24).

- 2.8 To develop competencies and capacity in South African Sign Language consistent with the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No.12 of 2012).
- 2.9 To accommodate the preparation of sufficient language teachers, researchers, interpreters, translators and other language practitioners, to serve the needs of South Africa's multilingual society.

3. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The University shall subscribe and uphold the policy of functional and additive multilingualism in and out of the Institution, starting with the Province, Country and moving on into the SADC Region.
- 3.2 The University sees multilingualism as a resource rather than a hindrance towards South Africa's political healing, economic growth and development, effective education and training, fairness and mutual respect across its socio-political strata.
- 3.3 The University shall where practically feasible create an environment and make technological (including simultaneous interpreting and translation) facilities in meetings and gatherings on

Campus and human power resources available to all staff and students for the acquisition of additional languages drawn especially from the University's linguistic hinterland.

- 3.4 The University shall uphold the policy of language equity and language parity as between the languages and speakers of the languages comprising its community in the first place and South Africa as a whole.
- 3.5 Instruction, research and publications in African languages and English and through translation will, as a matter of policy, where practicably reasonable and possible form the thin edge into the University's larger policy of multilingualism. Acceptance of multilingual ethos on Campus and in South Africa will, in time, translate into dialogue in other languages in the SADC Region. This in turn could be the University's contribution towards the African Renaissance.

3.6 The University shall endeavour to serve as a seat of language multilingualism and intellectualisation. To this end, a variety of measures and interventions will be implemented, including but not limited to:

3.6.1 Promoting creative writing, and the performing arts across languages and cultures; continuing with firm links with the Pan South African Language Board, the Provincial Language Council, the Provincial Language Bodies and similar language-based associations;

3.6.2 Leveraging advocacy strengths of the Student Representative Council as part of its contribution towards the University's multilingual policy, encouraging and promoting social and cultural activities across languages, religious and cultural boundaries;

3.6.3 Providing dedicated expert services such as acquiring in the medium to long term through the Department of Linguistics,

Translation and Interpreting expert services for the development of programmes in Sign Language and Braille.

3.6.4 Compilation of University records such as minutes of meetings, calendars, study materials (save those in the Indigenous African languages programmes), etc. be created, developed and made available in languages other than English, but where possible and practicable, and/or providing explanations of records generated in English in any one of the indigenous languages of the students to facilitate meaningful internalisation of concept.

3.6.4 Developing the Centre for Language Services and Development.¹

3.6.5 Notwithstanding English as the official language of communication, best efforts shall be made to ensure that the University website and other communication platforms provide information in other languages as practicable and as possible, except in which the information contained pertains to Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Tshivenda/ Xitsonga language issues or academic programmes offered in the aforesaid languages.

4. MEDIUM TO LONG TERM LANGUAGE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In the foregoing exposition, it is clear that the University of Limpopo cannot afford to ignore the language developments in the country and associated geo-political dynamics. For instance, the *Ministerial Committee Report on the Development of Indigenous African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education* (2005:23) recommended that the then University of the North which has now become the University of Limpopo should concentrate on the development and use of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Tshivenda and Xitsonga as mediums of instruction. Furthermore, it states:

Each higher education institution should be required to identify an indigenous African language of its choice for initial development as a medium of instruction (2005:24).

¹See section 5.4

Taking into account the University's vision and mission, geographical milieu, student population and the national situation, the following proposal is being made as far as its language policy is concerned (for this Policy, medium term refers to 2-5 years whereas long term denotes 6 years and beyond):

- 4.1 English will remain the primary medium of instruction in the majority of academic programmes because of the language's local and international relevance.
- 4.2 Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa will be used as a medium of instruction in Sesotho sa Leboa programmes, modules and any other selected modules specified by Senate. At postgraduate level, candidates will use Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa as the medium of instruction for these programmes.
- 4.3 Tshivenda will be used as a medium of instruction in Tshivenda programmes, modules and any other selected module as specified by the Senate. At the postgraduate level, candidates will use Tshivenda as the medium of instruction for these programmes.
- 4.4 Xitsonga will be used as a medium of instruction in Xitsonga programmes, modules and any selected modules specified by the Senate. At the postgraduate level, candidates will use Xitsonga as the medium of instruction for these programmes.
- 4.5 English and either Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa or Tshivenda or Xitsonga will be used as mediums of instruction in bilingual and multilingual academic programmes such as Contemporary English Language Studies and Multilingual Studies, and Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting.

- 4.6 English and either Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa or Tshivenda or Xitsonga will be used as mediums of instruction in Language Education. In the case where Language Education courses consist of African languages only, then the applicable African language(s) will serve as mediums of instruction.
- 4.7 Any national official or foreign language that a Faculty wishes to introduce depending on the viability of introducing it, will be taught in that language.

In addition to the abovementioned stipulations, where practicable, each Faculty should identify at least one fundamental module, be offered to the students in all the African Official languages of the Institution wherein a student uses their preferred language for study (L1), i.e. Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Xitsonga and Tshivenda as part of programme review within a given reasonable timeframe. Any suggested reasonable timeframe should enable the University to plan well for the intended introduction of African languages as mediums of instruction in programmes/modules other than African languages themselves.

5. OPERATIONALISING THE AIMS OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY

To operationalise the Aims of the University's Language Policy, the following issues must be considered as captured in the Policy Framework:

- 5.1 Implementation would not easily occur with no allocation of adequate resources towards supporting universities in the country. The Department of Higher Education and Training will establish and implement a funding model to enable the implementation of this Policy Framework. However, since the funding model is yet to be communicated for language policy implementation across all universities in the country, this policy proposes that the budget should be allocated from the Council controlled funds for its

implementation within the timeframe prescribed by the Policy Framework.

- 52 Staff members should be encouraged to be multilingual.
- 53 The University must establish a Senate Language Subcommittee (reporting to Senate Academic Planning Committee) to deal with language matters. Such a Committee shall be made of:
- Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching and Learning (Chairperson)
 - Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships
 - Executive Deans
 - Director of Quality Assurance
 - Director of School of Languages and Communication Studies
 - Senate representative
 - Student Representative Council Member for Academic Affairs
 - Institutional Forum Representative
 - Any relevant member co-opted by the Committee
- 54 The University **shall** establish a Centre for Language Development and Services to promote language diversity, multilingualism, internationalisation, and intellectualisation. One of the urgent responsibilities of the Centre, besides developing identified African Languages, shall be to render to the University as a whole, services such as translation of textbooks, tutorials, notes, question papers, editing and proofreading.

6. REFERENCES

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Benchmarking Institutions:

1. Northwest University (Language Policy approved on 22 November 2018 to be reviewed in 2021).
2. University of Western Cape (Language Policy approved on 28 September 2019).
3. University of KwaZulu Natal (Language Policy approved on 1 September 2006).
4. University of Pretoria (Language Policy application from 1 January 2019).
5. University of the Free State (Language Policy approved on 11 March 2016).
6. Rhodes University (Language Policy's 4th revision done on 12 September 2019).



LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: 2022-2026

Custodian/responsible executive	Registrar
Approved by	Council
Date of Approval	
Amendments	
Date of Amendments	
Next Review Date	2026
Website address to this document	UL Intranet

The objective of the University of Limpopo's Language Policy Implementation Plan is to give concrete effect to the policy imperatives as prescribed by both Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020) as well as UL's Language Policy (2021). The Policy Framework (2020:17) states categorically that:

- Institutions are required to develop or revise their language policies to ensure alignment with this policy framework. The policies must be supported by implementation plans which must be reviewed annually to monitor progress in terms of the requirements of the Department. The plans are to be submitted to the Department on or before a set deadline. The plans must also be responsive to the needs of developing competencies and capacity in languages which they use in the different domains. This is to ensure that language proficiency is not used as a means of excluding potential students from any university in South Africa.
- Institutions are required to report annually to the Department on progress made in implementing their language policies and language development plans. Resources and capacity to implement these policies and plans must be made available and be supported. These include information technology infrastructure relating to language

development and preservation. Universities also should provide means to promote access and success of students by providing quality supporting language services such as translation and interpreting services.

To achieve the aforesaid goals, the following activities will be implemented:

1. The designation of the language(s) of instruction and disciplinary study;
2. Establishment of a Language Research and Development Centre for UL's African official languages as fields of academic study and research;
3. Effectively utilise the Language Laboratory for language teachers, researchers, translators, interpreters and other language practitioners;
4. Development of competencies and capacity in South African Sign Language consistent with the use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act 12 of 2012);
5. Collaborative programmes with the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and other relevant statutory bodies and organisations for terminology development projects;
6. Collaborative programmes with the University of Pretoria and the University of Venda on the development of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Xitsonga and Tshivenda.
7. Collaboration with DHET and National Lexicographic Units (NLUs), for the development of dictionaries and other teaching and learning materials.
8. Where practicable, a gradual introduction of African languages as LoLT in at least one fundamental module or sections thereof per Faculty.

All the aforementioned activities together with the financial requirements are reflected on a table as follows:

Policy Imperative Implementation Strategy and Agency			Budget
1.	The designation of the language(s) of instruction and disciplinary study		None
1.1	The University shall adopt English as the main medium of instruction and publications (especially in journals beyond our borders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Almost all modules at UL are offered in English except a few that shall be identified. - The School of Languages and Communication Studies together with other UL units like Centre for Academic Excellence and Language Units within non-language Schools offer English to mainly first-year students of non-language qualifications. - Additionally, English is taught to students in the faculty of Law and Management, Health Sciences, and Science and Agriculture. 	

	1.2	The use of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa as a medium of instruction	Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa will be used solely as a medium of instruction in Sesotho sa Leboa programmes/modules and any other selected modules as specified by the Faculty at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.	
	1.3	The use of Tshivenda as a medium of instruction	Tshivenda will be used solely as a medium of instruction in Tshivenda programmes/modules and any other selected module as specified by the Faculty at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.	
	1.4	The use of Xitsonga as LoLT	Xitsonga will be used as a medium of instruction in Xitsonga programmes/modules and any selected modules specified by the Faculty. At the postgraduate level, candidates have the right to use Xitsonga as the medium of instruction.	
	1.5	The use of English and either Sepedi/Northern Sotho, Tshivenda and Xitsonga as LoLT in specified modules.	English and either Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa or Tshivenda or Xitsonga will be used as mediums of instruction in bilingual and multilingual academic programmes such as Contemporary English Language Studies and Multilingual Studies, and Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting	
	1.6	The use of English or Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Tshivenda and Xitsonga in Language Education.	English and either Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa or Tshivenda or Xitsonga will be used as mediums of instruction in Language Education. In the case where Language Education course consist of African languages only, then the	

			applicable African language(s) will serve as mediums of instruction.	
	1.7	Where practicable, each Faculty should identify at least one fundamental module to be offered in all the African Official Languages of the Institution wherein a student uses their preferred language for study (L1), i.e. Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Xitsonga and Tshivenda as of 2024.	There will be a gradual introduction of African languages as LoLT starting from at least one module per Faculty and such modules may be increased as success is observed in the initial ones. This will be the intension for the first round of 5 years before the policy is reviewed.	For a start a budget may not be needed as most work will be done in the Language Centre.
2	Establishment of a Language Development Centre for UL's African Official languages as fields of academic study and research (in line with item 39 of the Higher Education Act, 2020).			R1 000 000.00 for projects and R3 500 000.00 for salaries (One manager (R870 539.00)), four co-ordinators (R569 400.00 x 4) and one secretary (R331 500.00) annually. (TOTAL: R4 500 000)
	2.1	Language enhancement	The language field demands well-trained cadre of practitioners with a wide range of skills, knowledge and expertise. This has to do with the academic training of language practitioners who must emerge with specialisation in a variety of domains, e.g. terminology,	(R100 000.00)

			translation, interpreting, editing and human language technologies. To produce quality services in the previously disadvantaged languages, it is necessary to extend the knowledge base and skills among serving practitioners so that there is adequate capacity to deal with domains of knowledge from which they may have been effectively barred by lack of expertise or pre-democracy history.	
	2.2	Supporting language-related research and community engagement	The Centre will liaise with language departments at UL, regarding language initiatives that the departments are involved in and those that they intend forming collaborations with the Centre. The focus of research activities will be on applied research, i.e. short-term projects that will be relevant to the needs identified for a particular language. Tracer and longitudinal research studies to evaluate the programmes or the policy review will also be conducted whenever necessary.	R50 000.00
	2.3	Promoting reading and writing in identified African languages.	<p>With the primary objective of the Centre being to change deep-rooted negative attitudes toward indigenous languages, serious intervention needs to be made using a multi-pronged approach to improve reading and writing in the African languages.</p> <p>The Centre will establish collaboration with writers' associations and with any other non-governmental organisations that are actively</p>	(R50 000.00)

			involved with writers' associations or individual authors. The purpose here is to understand the capacity that is available and strengthen it where necessary. Workshops and seminars for authors could be a critical means to achieve this objective and so are language awareness campaigns and journalistic careers.	
	2.4	Heritage and language museums	<p>The Centre will have a unit dedicated to the documenting of stories, legends, African idioms, etc. part-time fieldworkers/researchers could be required to seek out the older people of the community who tend to be repositories of such rich material and to record their words for study and preservation. This work needs to be done without delay, as the African proverb puts it, "Every time an old one dies a library burns down".</p> <p>There is also a need for a Language Museum. African stories, folktales, legends, idioms, etc. have always been the principal means of transmitting our culture, values, tradition and customs from generation to generation. To prevent indigenous people from losing identity completely, steps need to be taken immediately to harvest this information from our different speech communities.</p> <p>Repositories of oral history also need to be</p>	(R100 000.00)

			traced by field workers so that we study and interpret the history without relegating it to any lesser status, because of its oral form. This will contribute to the Community Engagement for the African languages department.	
3.	Dedicate the Language Laboratory for language teachers, translators, interpreters and other language practitioners (as in item 28 of the Higher Education Act, 2020)			None (a few software and hearing aids needed will be obtained from the School of Languages and Communication Studies)
	3.1	Translation and Interpreting theory and practice to be conducted through the language laboratory.	Translation and Interpreting activities can be best studied through a language Laboratory. Modern and online teaching and learning will be encouraged through the use of the language laboratory in collaboration with the section dealing with Human language Technologies from Computer Science at UL.	None
	3.2	South African Sign Language Interpreting	The South African Sign Language teaching and interpreting will be offered through the laboratory to attain acceptable national standards in offering the qualification.	None
	3.3	Teacher trainees from the School of Education will use the laboratory for language study in general and so are the language students from English Studies and African languages.	Teacher trainees need to learn through the laboratory and practice how they can impart knowledge to learners using such facilities. All language students can benefit from the use of the facility for learning and research.	

4.	Development of competencies and capacity in South African Sign Language consistent with the use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act 12 of 2012) and item 26 of the Higher Education Act,2020)		Department of Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting
4.1	The Department of Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting to include South African Sign Language in its programme with at least two lecturers to start the programme	The positions have already been advertised and we await appointments to be made.	
5.	Collaborative programmes with the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) for terminology development projects. (Item 34 of the Higher Education Act,2020)		Covered by the Language Development Centre budget
6.	Collaborative programmes with the University of Pretoria and the University of Venda on the development of Sepedi/Northern Sotho, Xitsonga and Tshivenda (in line with item 40 of the Higher Education Act, 2020)		Covered by the Language Development Centre budget
6.1	Collaboration for Language development with the University of Pretoria and the University of Venda	<p>The University of Pretoria uses Sepedi as one of its three official languages already. The collaboration will be sort with them to learn together on issues of language development and uses of Institutional official languages.</p> <p>The University of Venda recognises Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga as their institutional official languages. Collaboration with them will enhance the attempts toward</p>	

7.	Collaboration with PanSALB, DHET and National Lexicographic Units (NLUs), for the development of dictionaries and other teaching and learning materials as in item 37 of the Act.		Covered by the Language Development Centre budget
7.1	Collaboration for Terminology development and Authentication	<p>The Language Development Centre in collaboration with PanSALB on the development of Terminologies. This collaboration already exists with the School of Languages and Communication Studies. Our members are invited for Terminology Development working meeting. PanSALB is roped in when the suggested terminologies have to be verified. In all Verification and Authentication meetings, PanSALB is the overseer.</p> <p>CHE will also be involved through collaboration in the development of terminology to oversee the final product and to deposit such authenticated terms in the Terminology bank.</p>	
7.2	Collaboration for the Compilation of dictionaries and other reading materials	The Language Development Centre will collaborate with the three NLUs for Sepedi/Northern Sotho, Tshivenda and Xitsonga to earn from them and contribute towards the compilation of dictionaries in the official African languages of the institution and Province. So will be the same with wings of DHET that are involved in dictionary writing	

			and monitoring or other reading materials written in the languages concerned.	
8.	Where practicable, a gradual introduction of African languages as LoLT in at least one fundamental module per Faculty.			

EVALUATION: Progress reports on the implementation of the Language Policy will be compiled by the Manager of the Centre for Language Development, submitted annually by the Registrar to the Executive Committee of Senate, the Institutional Forum, Senate and Council.

REVIEW: The Language Policy Implementation Plan will be reviewed every five years.

Government Notices • GoewermentskennisGewinGs

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

NO. 1160

30 OCTOBER 2020

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT, 1997 (ACT NO. 101 OF 1997)

**LANGUAGE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS DETERMINED IN TERMS OF SECTION 27(2) OF THE HIGHER
EDUCATION ACT, 101 OF 1997 AS AMENDED**

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, hereby promulgate the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions, determined in terms of section 3(1) of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 (amended)* as set out in the Schedule.

The purpose of the policy is to provide a framework for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of scholarship, teaching and learning and communication at South African public higher education institutions, in particular, universities. The policy provides guidelines for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of institutional language policies and contributes to transformation in higher education with specific reference to universities through enhancing the status and roles of previously marginalised South African languages to foster institutional inclusivity as well as social cohesion.



Dr BE Nzimanda, MP

Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

Date: 09/08/2020



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SCHEDULE

THE LANGUAGE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS,

DETERMINED IN TERMS OF SECTION 27(2) OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT, 101
OF 1997 (AS AMENDED)

July 2020

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PREAMBLE

The Minister of Education developed and promulgated the *Language Policy for Higher Education* in 2002. The aim of the policy was to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and practices of South African public higher education institutions.

Since the promulgation of the *Language Policy for Higher Education* there have been various initiatives on the part of the Department of Higher Education and Training (hereafter the Department) to monitor progress and assess the extent to which institutional practices are in line with national policy. The most recent initiative is the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the Development of African Languages in Higher Education (MAPALHE) established in 2012, whose work resulted in the “*Report on the Use of African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education*” (2015). From this report and others before it, it is apparent that there has been little progress made in exploring and exploiting the potential of African languages in facilitating access and success in higher education institutions.

This policy framework is therefore a review of the 2002 “*Language Policy for Higher Education*” and it seeks to address the challenge of the underdevelopment and underutilisation of official African languages at higher education institutions whilst simultaneously sustaining the standard and utilisation of languages that are already developed.

Drawing from the principles and values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), as well as the relationship between language and cognition in the learning process, the revised *Language Policy Framework for Higher Education* seeks to promote multilingualism as a strategy to facilitate meaningful access and participation by university communities (students and staff) in various university activities, including cognitive and intellectual development. The policy framework aims to promote and strengthen the use of all official languages across all functional domains of public higher education including scholarship; teaching and learning; as well as wider communication in line with Section 29(2) of the South African Constitution.

ACRONYMS

ACRONYMS	DEFINITION
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information Systems
HEQF	Higher Education Qualification Framework
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LPHE	Language Policy for Higher Education
MAPALHE	Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PSET	Post-School Education and Training

DEFINITION OF TERMS

TERMS	DEFINITION
Academic language	The language used in teaching and learning, knowledge production and dissemination. It includes, for example, discipline-specific vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, argumentation and discourse, and applications of rhetorical conventions and devices that are typical for a content area.
Access	Affordance, by a higher education institution, of the opportunity to students to register for, and pursue education and training; or of the opportunity to staff members to work in the institution.
Collaborative partnerships	The working together of two or more people or institutions in reaching a specific goal.
Epistemic access	The successful process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination through enabling teaching and learning pedagogies.
Higher Education	It means all learning programmes leading to a qualification that meets the requirements of the Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF).
Higher Education institution	Any institution that provides higher education on a full-time, part-time or distance basis and is established and declared as a public higher education institution in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997).
Multilingualism	The effective use of multiple languages either by an individual or by a community.
Inclusivity	An expressed policy intent on, or practice of, embracing diversity and bringing people from various backgrounds into the fold at different levels institutionally, into groups and individually.
Indigenous languages	Languages 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. An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region or country and spoken by indigenous people.

Language(s) of Learning and Teaching	A language or languages used to teach or instruct learners or students in an educational environment.
Language of scholarship	A language used in an academic setting for knowledge production and dissemination, as well as for technology transfer.
Official South African languages	This refers to the eleven official languages of South Africa as specified in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (i.e. Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and English).
Scientific Language	The language used by scientists to communicate their scholarly work or research findings.
Social cohesion	The degree or extent to which a society is integrated, united and functional, providing an environment in which its citizens can live harmoniously and flourish.

INTRODUCTION

1. Language continues to be a barrier to access and success for many students at South African higher education institutions. Despite their status as official languages, indigenous languages have in the past and at present, structurally not been afforded the official space to function as academic and scientific languages.
2. South African higher education institutions are therefore confronted with the challenge of ensuring the development of a multilingual environment in which all official South African languages, particularly those which have been historically marginalised, are afforded space to develop as languages of scholarship, research as well as teaching and learning.
3. The persistent underdevelopment and undervaluing of indigenous languages should not be allowed if public higher education institutions are to meet the diverse linguistic needs of their student population. Conditions must therefore, be created for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of meaningful academic discourse, as well as sources of knowledge in the different disciplines of higher education.

BACKGROUND

4. In 2002, the Department of Education (DoE) developed and promulgated the Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE). The aim of the policy was to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and practices.
5. Following the promulgation of the *Language Policy for Higher Education*, a number of initiatives were introduced by the Ministry of Education (later, Higher Education and Training) to assess the status of indigenous languages at public higher education institutions, and map out the interventions required to strengthen the development and use of these languages.
6. The most recent was the Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education (MAPALHE) established in 2012 to assess existing institutional language policies and their level of implementation at universities, and advise the Minister on how indigenous languages could be strengthened. The Panel's report was published in 2015, and one of the recommendations was a call for the review of the 2002 *Language Policy*

for *Higher Education* (LPHE). The report indicated that the policy has limitations which impede effective implementation by universities. Some of the limitations cited include lack of enforceable mechanisms built into the policy; lack of funding or incentives by government to support the implementation of the policy; as well as lack of clear directives within the policy on how multilingualism is to be realised within higher education institutions.

7. The report also raised concerns that the language and concepts utilised in the policy were obsolete, and not in line with new developments in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system introduced in 2009, following the split of the former Department of Education into the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).
8. Lack of alignment with the curriculum and language policy of the DBE was also cited as a major hurdle for the development and use of indigenous languages at university level. There was therefore a call for partnership and collaboration between the Department and DBE to ensure systemic development of indigenous languages, from school level up to tertiary level.
9. Finally, partnerships between universities (as custodians of scholarship) in the development of languages were underscored, and support for African language departments at universities was also highlighted as critical.
10. This policy framework therefore seeks to address the above-mentioned challenges and it replaces the *Language Policy for Higher Education* (2002).

PURPOSE

11. The purpose of the policy framework is to:
 - 11.1 provide a framework for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of scholarship, teaching and learning and communication at higher education institutions;
 - 11.2 provide guidelines for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of institutional language policies;
 - 11.3 contribute to transformation in higher education with specific reference to universities through enhancing the status and roles of previously marginalised South African languages to foster institutional inclusivity and social cohesion.

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12. The policy framework therefore seeks to address the following:
- 12.1 The language of teaching and learning at public higher education institutions, bearing in mind the fundamental right of persons to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public education institutions, where it is reasonably practicable to do so, and the duty of the state to ensure effective access to and implementation of this right (section 29(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996);
 - 12.2 The language or languages of official communication within higher education institutions;
 - 12.3 The role of higher education in promoting, and creating conditions for the development of historically marginalised official South African languages, as well as the Khoi, Nama, San languages, and Sign Language;
 - 12.4 The right of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution;
 - 12.5 The role of higher education in preparing sufficient language teachers, interpreters, translators and other language practitioners, to serve the needs of a diverse South Africa's multilingual society.

SCOPE OF APPLICATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

13. The Policy framework applies to all public higher education institutions in South Africa. However, private higher education institutions, in their teaching, learning and other education activities must ensure that they do so in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 as well as the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997 (as amended).

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

14. The policy framework must be interpreted and applied in a manner that is consistent with the following legislative frameworks and regulations: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Section 29(2)); the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997 as amended); the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013); and the National Language Policy Framework (2003); the National Curriculum Statement:

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grade R–12 (2010); Pan South African Language Board Act No. 59 of 1995; and the National Development Plan (NDP).

15. The language policies of both public and private higher education institutions must take into account the constitutional imperatives such as access, equity and inclusivity and be context sensitive in order to avoid racial discrimination, unjust exclusion, preservation of exclusivity so as to promote social cohesion and nation building in all institutions of learning.
16. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa declares that the official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. It thus places an obligation on the state to take practical and positive measures to develop, elevate the status and advance the use of indigenous languages, recognising their historically diminished use and status in order to achieve the aspiration of Section 29(2) of the Constitution and ultimately ensure that “all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably,” (Section 6 [1], [2] and [4] of the Founding Provisions).
17. Section 29(2) of the Constitution accords every South Africa the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. It states that in order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of this right, all reasonable educational alternatives must be considered, taking into account equity and practicability.
18. Section 27(2) of the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997 as amended), provides that, subject to the policy determined by the Minister, the councils of public higher education institutions, with the concurrence of their senates, must determine the language policy of a higher education institution and must publish and make such policy available on request.
19. The National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (2020), amongst others, calls for the transformation of curricula to reflect the location of knowledge and curricula in the context of the African continent. The study of African languages and literature is seen as important in this regard.
20. Similarly, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013) calls for a cross-disciplinary approach that would ensure the integration of African languages into the formal programmes of institutions. To achieve this goal, targeted support and the

strengthening of African-language departments at universities in line with areas of regional strength are encouraged. This is in order to ensure that capacity is built to expand teaching of official South African languages, in particular, indigenous African languages, as well as their development as languages of literature, science and academia.

VALUES

21. This policy framework is guided by the following values which are foregrounded by constitutional and legislative imperatives:

- 21.1 The need for higher education to value all indigenous languages as sources of knowledge, capable of informing learning of the different disciplines in higher education;
- 21.2 The value of collaborative partnerships to promote multilingualism;
- 21.3 Commitment to the promotion of language equity; equality and fairness;
- 21.4 Commitment to the development and promotion of indigenous languages to redress past injustices;
- 21.5 The nurturing of an environment where multilingualism is not seen as a problem but as a resource to facilitate cognitive development, epistemic access, inclusiveness, transformation, social cohesion and respect for all languages;
- 21.6 The promotion of human dignity;
- 21.7 A stance against the use of any language for the purposes of exploitation, exclusion, domination and discrimination; and
- 21.8 The creation of a receptive institutional culture at universities.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

22. The Language Policy Framework for Higher Education Institutions is embedded within the following principles which must guide the interpretation and application of this policy:

- 22.1 The promotion of access and success in the academic enterprise of public higher education institutions;
- 22.2 The recognition and respect of the linguistic and cultural diversity that exist at South African higher education institutions;

- 22.3 Parity of esteem and use of all official languages as determined by constitutional and legislative imperatives;
- 22.4 The nurturing of an environment where multilingualism is not seen as a problem but as a resource to facilitate cognitive development, epistemic access, inclusiveness, transformation, social cohesion and respect for all languages;
- 22.5 A recognition that languages are critical resources in the transmission of knowledge, cognitive development and effective participation in the knowledge economy; and
- 22.6 Enhancing people-centeredness in addressing the interests, needs and aspirations of a wide range of language communities through ongoing dialogue and debate.

POLICY STATEMENT

- 23. This policy framework recognises the important role of higher education in the promotion of multilingualism for social, cultural, intellectual and economic development.
- 24. All institutions must develop strategies, policies and implementation plans for promoting multilingualism as defined by this policy framework. Such plans must indicate at least two official languages, other than the medium of instruction or language of teaching and learning, for development for scholarly discourse as well as official communication.
- 25. This policy framework commits to the development and study of all official South African languages especially those which were historically marginalised, including the Khoi, Nama and San languages. Institutions are required to develop language plans and strategies indicating mechanisms they will put in place to enhance the development and promotion of indigenous African languages as centres of research and scholarship.
- 26. The policy framework recognises the need to develop competencies and capacity in South African sign language consistent with the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No.12 of 2012).
- 27. In relation to other international languages, this policy framework enjoins institutions to include in their language policies and plans, programmes that encourage the study of international languages, in particular, those languages that are important for the promotion of South Africa's cultural, trade and diplomatic relations. However, priority should be given to historically marginalised South African languages, particularly those granted official status by the Constitution of the Republic.

28. Higher education institutions must assist in preparing sufficient language teachers, interpreters, translators and other language practitioners, to serve the needs of South Africa's multilingual society.

Domains of use of the languages

29. *Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)*: Recognising the *de facto* status of English as the language of learning and teaching across South African higher education institutions, this policy calls upon universities to adopt a flexible approach in the implementation of English as the language of learning and teaching. Necessary support must be provided to students for whom English is not their first language or mother tongue, in order to ensure academic success.
30. Where demonstrable competencies have been established in one or more languages other than English, such competencies and initiatives should not be impeded, but rather, nurtured and encouraged as long as they do not serve as barriers of access to speakers of other languages. The Constitutional values of inclusivity, social cohesion and equity of access must always be upheld in the implementation of this policy.
31. *Scholarship, Teaching and Learning*: higher education institutions must demonstrate in their language plans the investment they have made or will make in the development of official languages into languages of teaching and learning, scholarship and research. This is in addition to the LOTL. The plans must also reflect on ways and mechanisms to strengthen African Language Departments. Continuous research must be undertaken by the institutions, to explore and document strategies for intellectualising indigenous languages for use in higher education.
32. *Communication*: All official internal institutional communication must be conveyed in at least two official languages other than English, as a way of cultivating a culture of multilingualism. Institutions must consider all possible options to accentuate the use of indigenous African languages in official communication and ceremonies.

Enablers

33. *Institutional language policy and plans*: Institutions must develop or revise their language policies and plans to accord greater importance to indigenous African languages for purposes of teaching and learning, scholarship, communication and administrative use.

The policies and plans must indicate strategies that the universities will adopt to promote multilingualism.

34. *Collaborative programmes*: Institutions are strongly encouraged foster trans-institutional and inter-institutional collaborations in the development and strengthening of official African languages. The focus of such programmes should be on strategies that could be adopted in higher education to achieve quality education for all students, as well as to promote multilingualism.
35. *Institutional culture*: The creation of a receptive institutional culture which embraces linguistic diversity and promotion of a climate where people feel affirmed and empowered to realise their full potential must be supported.

Collaborations and partnerships

36. The Department will work in partnership with relevant government departments, in particular, the DBE, to rally support for meaningful multilingual education embracing all indigenous African languages starting from school level. Multilingual education should focus on proper vocational preparation of teachers for a multilingual environment, with emphasis on teaching in African languages.
37. The promotion of indigenous African languages for use in scholarship in higher education will require, amongst others, the development of dictionaries and other teaching and learning materials. The Department will work with other relevant government departments and entities to create or strengthen existing open-source multidisciplinary terminology bank to be accessed and used as a teaching and learning resource by all higher education institutions.
38. Institutions are encouraged to work closely with the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in the development of all terminology and authentication processes in all disciplines, and seek to deposit such authenticated terminology in the multidisciplinary terminology bank.
39. Institutions must establish or strengthen (if existing) centres for Language Development to undertake relevant research required with respect to each of the official languages. These centres must be encouraged to enter into collaborative programmes with other relevant national language development bodies.

40. Institutions are strongly encouraged to develop regional partnerships and collaborative language development programmes with other universities and language bodies to avoid working in *silos*. This will assist in the sharing of information and data relating to language and terminology development for various disciplines.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

41. Institutions are required to develop or revise their language policies to ensure alignment with this policy framework. The policies must be supported by implementation plans which must be reviewed annually to monitor progress in terms of the requirements of the Department. The plans are to be submitted to the Department on or before a set deadline. The plans must also be responsive to the needs of developing competencies and capacity in languages which they use in the different domains. This is to ensure that language proficiency is not used as a means of excluding potential students from any university in South Africa.
42. Institutions are required to report annually to the Department on progress made in implementing their language policies and language development plans. Resources and capacity to implement these policies and plans must be made available and be supported. These include information technology infrastructure relating to language development and preservation. Universities also should provide means to promote access and success of students by providing quality supporting language services such as translation and interpreting services.
43. The Department will establish and implement a funding model to enable the implementation of this Policy framework. The model will require universities to submit language development plans for approval by the Department before funding could be made available. The evaluation criteria for institutional plans will be outlined in the implementation guidelines that the Department will develop and share with the universities. Institutions will have the opportunity to revise and submit in the following year (n+1) plans which were not approved during the year of assessment.
44. The Department will monitor the impact of language policy in higher education, to establish whether or not policy implementation is achieving desired results. This will include the collection and analysis of relevant data through the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS). The Department will occasionally conduct

impact assessment studies to evaluate policy responsiveness to the identified challenges.

45. The Department will develop and implement a monitoring instrument, with indicators that will form part of the monitoring process. Where appropriate, institutional visits will also form part of the regular monitoring exercise to address the challenges hampering the implementation of short and long term language development programmes.

REVIEW OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

46. This policy framework will be reviewed whenever necessary, ideally within five years from the date of implementation.

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

47. The policy framework is effective from 01 January 2022.