



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY<sup>®</sup>  
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT  
INSTITUTIONAL OFFICE

## Institutional Language Policy of the North-West University

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<b>Policy owner</b>	Director: Institutional Language Directorate
<b>Responsible division</b>	Institutional Language Directorate
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# Institutional Language Policy for the establishment of a functionally multilingual environment at the NWU

## 1 Preamble

As a pre-eminent university in Africa, driven by the pursuit of knowledge and innovation, with a unique institutional culture based upon the values the University espouses, the North-West University (NWU) has adopted this Language Policy and Plan on 23 November 2012 to pursue, accommodate and provide a fair and functionally multilingual language environment across all business units at the University.

## 2 Policy statement

It is the policy of the North-West University to provide a consistent and constructive set of guidelines in line with Section 3(2) of the NWU Statute<sup>1</sup> in order to implement a language policy and plan that are (i) flexible and functional, (ii) that redress the language imbalances of the past, (iii) that endorse multilingualism, and (iv) that promote access, integration and a sense of belonging.

This policy and plan emanate from an extensive consultative process that was followed across the NWU, which also involved a comprehensive language audit.

## 3 Policy objectives

- 3.1 In broad terms, the language policy and plan aim to bring about an NWU language management environment in which
  - i. the language realities at the different campuses are continuously taken into account for practical implementation purposes,
  - ii. sensitivity is shown towards the language preferences, language needs and language expectations of individuals and groups that have an interest in the institution,
  - iii. the language policy and plan remain aligned with the demands of the macro-environment in which the institution functions,
  - iv. the regional languages that are used at the campuses of the NWU (Afrikaans, Setswana, Sesotho and English) are regarded as national assets, and where implementable and measurable contributions are made towards the use of these language as languages of higher education.
- 3.2 Within the parameters of the principle of functional multilingualism, Setswana, English and Afrikaans are employed as official languages of the NWU, and Sesotho has working-language status for use at the Vaal Triangle Campus.

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<sup>1</sup> Statute of the NWU, Government Notice 795, 8 August 2005 (pp 11-12)

## 4 Overarching language strategy of the North-West University

- 4.1 The commitment of the NWU to implement a functionally multilingual language policy forms part of its efforts to rethink, reposition and review itself in terms of its fitness of and for purpose. This endeavour is aligned with the vision and mission of the University and remains closely linked to the on-going institutional planning process of the NWU.
- 4.2 The NWU acknowledges the challenges associated with providing for the language needs and expectations of a multilingual society and a multilingual university environment. In light hereof, the language management approach of the institution allows room for different strategies and models for the implementation of functional multilingualism within such an overarching multilingual context.
- 4.3 The Institutional Language Policy forms the backdrop for a continuous consultative process where the language policy principles and statements are operationalised according to an institutional language implementation plan that is managed in diversified and tailor-made ways at the different levels of operation at the institution.
- 4.4 In line with policy-management principles the language policy and plan will be revised with five- year intervals. The revision process should take place by means of a proper situational analysis and a clear externally and internal alignment process.

## 5 Definition of Functional Multilingualism

- 5.1 **Functional** multilingualism means that the choice of a particular language in a particular situation is determined by the situation/context in which it is used. Variables such as the purpose of the communication and levels of language proficiency of the interlocutors play a determining role in the choice of a particular language code or language codes. This principle guides the decision on which South African languages are utilised by the NWU as official and working languages: sensitivity is demonstrated towards the main regional languages used in provinces where campuses of the institution are situated.
- 5.2 **Multilingual** refers to the use of two or preferably more languages (societal multilingualism) and the ability to use two or preferably more languages (individual multilingualism).

## 6 Policy authority

The following instances of legislation act as steering principles for the language management endeavour at the North-West University:

- The Constitution<sup>2</sup>
- White Paper on Higher Education<sup>3</sup>,
- Higher Education Act<sup>4</sup>,
- Government Notice on the Higher Education Landscape<sup>5</sup>,
- National Language Plan for Higher Education<sup>6</sup>,
- Government Notice on the African Languages<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Act 108 of 1996

<sup>3</sup> Government Notice 1196 van 1997

<sup>4</sup> Act 101 (1997), Section 27(2)

<sup>5</sup> Government Notice 855, 2002

<sup>6</sup> National Plan for Higher Education, 2001

<sup>7</sup> Government Notice 35028, 10 February 2012

## **7 Governance, management, and roles and responsibilities**

- 7.1 While the NWU Council and Senate fulfil a governance role with regard to the NWU Institutional Language Policy and Plan, Institutional Management (with the respective campus and other management structures residing therein) remains responsible for the resourcing, coordination, implementation of the policy across all business units of the University, and for its monitoring.
- 7.2 The Institutional Language Directorate acts as the institutional facilitating structure enabling the NWU to conduct language management in a pragmatic, systematic and sustainable way, and sees to the equitable provision and coordination of language policy-related matters across all business units of the University.
- 7.3 The language ombud function where language queries and complaints can be lodged resides in the position of the Director: Institutional Language Directorate.

## **8 Scope of application**

This policy and plan relate to the following domains:

- Teaching-Learning and assessment
- Administrative and working environment, and the linguistic landscape
- Research and Development
- Organised student life and language support for work preparation
- Language acquisition, language improvement and quality of language usage

## **9 The domains of the Institutional Language Policy and related policy principles and statements**

### **9.1 Teaching-Learning and Assessment**

#### **9.1.1 Language policy principles**

- 9.1.1.1 Enhancement of access and success remains the primary premise for the language policy for teaching-learning and assessment at the NWU. This principle determines the way in which the NWU implements functional multilingualism in the teaching and learning environment across all campuses of the University.
- 9.1.1.2 The NWU's language policy for tuition continuously accounts for the language demography and language preferences of a particular campus within an environment where the language rights of all people concerned are respected.
- 9.1.1.3 The following parameters demarcate the boundaries of a language policy for tuition and are accounted for in a flexible and accommodating way in the language plan for tuition:
  - i. language distribution and language needs at the respective campuses,
  - ii. different niche markets served by the modes of delivery and/or teaching programmes, and
  - iii. infrastructural capacity at the NWU.

#### **9.1.2 Language policy statements**

- 9.1.2.1 Although English and Afrikaans are used as primary languages of tuition at the NWU, concerted efforts are made at each of the NWU campuses to (i) implement Setswana and Sesotho for teaching-learning purposes; (ii) to monitor the effectiveness hereof and (iii) to report annually to IM on the progress and outcomes of these projects.
- 9.1.2.2 Different language modes of delivery are employed at the different campuses to accomplish enhancement and facilitating of access to higher education. These modes are: single medium teaching, parallel- and dual-medium teaching, as well as educational interpreting services (EIS). (Please note that the expansion EIS to more teaching programmes takes place according to an agreed set of standards and procedures.) Campus managements are encouraged to continue exploring with various possibilities in order to establish more optimal multilingual teaching-learning environments, and to liaise with the Language Directorate in this regard.

- 9.1.2.3 The Language Directorate serves as point of report and mediation for the management of language queries or in instances where language rights have allegedly been violated, or for the prevention of the violation of language rights.
- 9.1.2.4 It remains the responsibility of the Language Directorate and the respective campus managements to translate the principles of the language policy for tuition into viable and measurable action steps, and to negotiate, manage and monitor the implementation hereof in continuous ways.

## **9.2 Languages for administration, work and the NWU linguistic landscape**

### **9.2.1 Language policy principles**

- 9.2.1.1 The NWU accepts that the diverse linguistic realities at the different operating levels of the institution as well as sensitivity towards the language preferences of internal and external stakeholders remain directional for the way in which it determines the manner in which its official languages will be employed as working languages and languages of administration. This principle also directs internal and external communication at the institution, as well as the way in which the linguistic landscape will look.
- 9.2.1.2 The functionally multilingual approach acts as guiding principle in this regard.
- 9.2.1.3 The determination of language choice for internal and external communication continuously takes the following factors into consideration: the situation/context of communication, the purpose of the communication, the language needs and levels of language proficiency of interlocutors.

### **9.2.2 Language policy statements**

- 9.2.2.1 The implementation of functional multilingualism for working, administrative and linguistic landscape purposes takes place in a systematic and goal-oriented way. By means of a consultative process, and with due account of the language rights of stakeholders, strategies are lobbied and structures put in place in an on-going way so as to implement functional multilingualism as optimally as possible within the NWU workplace.
- 9.2.2.2 External and corporate communication takes place in a professional way in the official languages of the NWU – English, Afrikaans, and Setswana – and the choice of language of communication is continuously determined by the purpose of the communicative event, the language needs and language competencies of interlocutors.

## **9.3 Research & Development**

### **9.3.1 Language policy principles**

- 9.3.1.1 The NWU delivers quality research outputs that are read and utilised internationally; therefore researchers are encouraged to publish their research results in language(s) accessible to scholarly peers.
- 9.3.1.2 The choice of language of publication is up to the researcher, while variables such as the purpose of the research report, the putative readership, as well as the language proficiency of the potential readers are taken into account when it comes to language choice.
- 9.3.1.3 The NWU remains involved in the quest for creative solutions in a national contribution towards the intellectualisation of multilingualism<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Intellectualisation of multilingualism" refers to a language planning programme whereby the different languages used at the institution are not only developed and implemented to be used in the full academic domain (i.e. as languages for administrative, teaching and research purposes, but in particular it pertains to those measures that will ensure the scholarly use of the languages in such a way that it fosters the academic self-respect and values of the peoples of Africa.

### **9.3.2 Language policy statements**

- 9.3.2.1 The language choice for research outputs remains with individual researchers and the decision is taken and carried out in consultation with the relevant research director.
- 9.3.2.2 The Language Directorate involves itself in active ways in action research regarding the desirability and attainability of the intellectualisation of multilingualism. In this endeavour it remains closely involved in the national debate on the matter; it also collaborates with experts on the matter at campus levels, and continuously reports the outcomes of the on-going networking to Institutional Management as part of its performance agreement system.
- 9.3.2.3 As per the decision of Council in November 2010 on the organised and on-going involvement of the NWU in the intellectualisation of multilingualism by means of the so-called anchor-campus notion, the NWU primarily views this term as a development concept that needs to be developed in an organised and organic manner.

## **9.4 Organised student life and language support for work preparation**

### **9.4.1 Language policy principles**

- 9.4.1.1 The linguistic diversity of students at the different campuses of the NWU is regarded as an institutional asset and is viewed as an indispensable part of contributing towards the establishment of an inclusive and accommodating student environment.
- 9.4.1.2 The NWU is serious about equipping students with the necessary language skills to enable them to enter into professional careers.

### **9.4.2 Language policy statements**

- 9.4.2.1 This section of the language policy accounts for this diversity in the following way: within the functional multilingual environment, the language policy provides for the protection of the linguistic rights of students, optimal access of students to enable full participation in student life, and also sees to it that vertical and horizontal communication at the respective campuses take the language demography and language preferences of persons concerned into consideration.
- 9.4.2.2 Opportunities are created to assist students in constructive ways to hone and improve their professional language skills.

## **9.5 Language acquisition, language improvement and quality of language usage**

### **9.5.1 Language policy principles**

- 9.5.1.1 In an attempt to enhance the multilingual competencies of staff and students, structures exist across the NWU aiming at the improvement of individual multilingual skills within the academic and administrative and student environments.
- 9.5.1.2 The quality of language usage – spoken and written – is important to the NWU, which means that a set of workable guidelines is needed to gauge and guide language standards applicable to the University.

### **9.5.2 Language policy statements**

- 9.5.2.1 Staff and students are encouraged to broaden their multilingual skills in order to function effectively in different contexts. Language acquisition and language improvement courses are presented at the various campuses of the NWU, and staff and students are encouraged to enrol for these courses. Front-line staff at all service points should be functionally multilingual.
- 9.5.2.2 Language editing and translation services are offered by the Inst. Language Directorate. These services are also rendered by some Schools of Language at campus levels. Staff members are encouraged to make use of these services. The Institutional Language Directorate has the mandate to monitor and assess the overall quality of language usage at the NWU, and to devise appropriate procedures by means of which the quality of language usage at the NWU is of an appropriate standard.

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