



## **Language Policy of the NWU**

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## LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE NWU

### Preamble

Against the background of the dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness, and an ethic of care, the Council of the North-West University (NWU), has adopted this language policy on 23 June 2022 to pursue and provide for a fair and functionally multilingual university language environment.

### 1 Interpretation and Application

This policy must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the –

- 1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 1.2 Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997;
- 1.3 Statute of the North-West University (“the Statute”);
- 1.4 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013);
- 1.5 Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020);
- 1.6 National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grade R–12 (2010);
- 1.7 Pan South African Language Board Act, 59 of 1995;
- 1.8 National Development Plan (NDP); and
- 1.9 Relevant policies and rules as provided by the University Council.

### 2 Definitions

In this policy and related documents –

“**flagship programme**” refers to an identified academic programme of the university in which the development and implementation of an African language as the language of teaching and learning has been designated;

“**front-line employee**” is an employee who, as part of their day to day work at the university, engages with students, prospective students and the public;

“**functional multilingualism**” means that the choice of a particular language in a particular situation is determined by the situation or context in which it is used;

“**intellectualisation of African languages**” refers to a language planning programme whereby the university’s African languages of choice are developed and implemented to be languages for administrative, teaching and research purposes, but in particular to measures designed to ensure the scholarly use of the languages in such a way that it fosters the academic self-respect and values regardless of language preferences;

“**multilingual**” refers to the use of two or preferably more languages, referred to as “societal multilingualism”, and the ability to use two or more languages, referred to as “individual multilingualism”;

“**languages of choice**” refers to the four languages identified by the university to be acquired, learned and developed;

“**translanguaging**” means that in the teaching and learning situation, various languages are used to explore key concepts with a view to making this clear and understandable to the students their own languages, as well as learning new insights arising from the interpretation of the concept in the university’s languages of choice .

### **3 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide for deepening engagement with multilingualism at the NWU by seeking to ensure the development of University's languages of choice in a manner that is functionally multilingual and inclusive.

### **4 Scope of Application**

This policy applies to the functions and activities of the university, to the programmes offered by the university related to teaching-learning, to research and innovation, to student life, corporate relations and marketing, to student and staff administration, and to related processes and systems.

### **5 Policy Statement**

It is the policy of the NWU to –

- 5.1 provide a consistent and constructive framework to implement a language policy and language plans in compliance with paragraph 7(6) of the Statute;
- 5.2 implement language plans giving effect to this policy so as to give expression to the commitment to the implementation of the constitutional provisions concerning multilingualism in South Africa;
- 5.3 within the parameters of the principle of functional multilingualism, employ English, Setswana, Sesotho and Afrikaans as the University's languages of choice;
- 5.4 without diminishment of the use of English and Afrikaans, develop Setswana and Sesotho as languages of communication, engagements and teaching and learning, understanding that:
  - 5.4.1 as part of the development of Setswana and Sesotho, the NWU must develop regional, national and, where practicable, international partnerships and collaborative language development programmes with other universities and language bodies; and
  - 5.4.2 such partnerships will aim to assist in the sharing of information and data relating to language and terminology development for various disciplines among such institutions and bodies, and
- 5.5 view the intellectualisation of African languages as a development concept that is given effect in an organised and organic manner.

### **6 Policy Objectives**

The objective of this policy is to provide a framework for the development and implementation of language plans, further articulated in paragraph 7, that bring about a language management environment in which –

- 6.1 the language realities at the different campuses are continuously taken into account for practical implementation purposes;
- 6.2 sensitivity is shown towards the language preferences, language needs and language expectations of individuals and groups that have an interest in the institution;
- 6.3 the language plans and guidelines remain aligned with the demands of the macro-environment in which the university functions, and
- 6.4 the regional languages used at the campuses of the NWU (English, Afrikaans, Setswana and Sesotho) are regarded as national assets, and where implementable and measurable, contributions are made towards the use of these languages as languages of higher education, administration and student engagement.

### **7 Language Plans**

- 7.1 Each Faculty and support department of the university must develop and implement a language plan approved by Senate in consultation with the University Management Committee (UMC).
- 7.2 The UMC is responsible for the oversight of the management and implementation of the language plans of faculties and support departments.
- 7.3 Faculties and support departments are responsible for the operationalisation of and reporting on their plans to Senate and the UMC.

- 7.4 The language plans must be consistent with this policy and provide further guidelines for their implementation, monitoring and reporting by the Faculty and support department.
- 7.5 The vice-chancellor must annually submit a progress report to Council on the implementation of this policy.
- 7.6 The language plans and guidelines must be revised at least once every 3 years.

## **8 Roles and Responsibilities**

- 8.1 The Senate is tasked with the approval of language plans, as developed by faculties and support departments.
- 8.2 The UMC must ensure sufficient resource allocation towards the development, implementation and monitoring of this policy and the language plans emanating from it.
- 8.3 The Senate Committee for Language Planning and Advisory Services (SCLPAS) must –
  - 8.3.1 coordinate and synergise activities in pursuit of the intellectualisation of the African languages of the region in the domains of teaching and learning and research and utilise African languages in support departments, and
  - 8.3.2 provide advice on the development and implementation of planning associated with teaching-learning and research, as well as support departments, as contemplated in paragraph 7.
- 8.4 Faculties and support departments are responsible for the development, implementation and internal monitoring of the language plans giving effect to this policy.
- 8.5 The Language Directorate has the mandate to monitor and assess the overall progress made with implementing the language policy in the teaching and learning, research, student life and administrative spaces at the NWU, and to develop appropriate procedures for ensuring the appropriate standard for the quality of language usage at the NWU in pursuit of this policy.
- 8.6 Flagship programmes, as well as other multilingual initiatives of faculties as well as multilingual initiatives implemented by support departments, are monitored by the relevant Faculty Board or support department.

## **9 Language Policy Principles for Teaching-Learning and Assessment**

Pursuant to the policy statement set out in paragraph 5, the following statements and principles apply to teaching-learning and assessment:

### **9.1 Language policy statement for teaching-learning and assessment**

- 9.1.1 Multilingualism and the development and use of African languages in higher education are intended to contribute to the values of the NWU concerning inclusion and the quality of programmes presented.
- 9.1.2 The development of Setswana and Sesotho, particularly with a view to increasing access and enabling success through the use of these languages, is intended to contribute to student academic success and development, thereby adding value to graduate attributes, particularly for professionally oriented programmes offered by the NWU.

### **9.2 General principles for teaching-learning and assessment**

Regarding teaching-learning and assessment the implementation of this policy must be premised on the following principles:

- 9.2.1 Access and success of students pertaining to teaching-learning and assessment are enhanced and optimised by functional multilingualism.
- 9.2.2 Practical mechanisms that enable the implementation of functional multilingualism in the teaching and learning environment must be established across all campuses.
- 9.2.3 Not only the language rights of all students concerned must be respected, but the university should prepare students for a contemporary South Africa and enable their full participation in the South African professional and social environments.
- 9.2.4 The following parameters must be accounted for in a flexible and accommodating way:
  - 9.2.4.1 the language needs within each of the Faculties and Business School across the university campuses;

- 9.2.4.2 the different markets served by the modes of delivery and teaching programmes;
- 9.2.4.3 the language needs and terminology within the relevant support departments across the university; and
- 9.2.4.4 the available infrastructural capacity, including finance and staff.

### **9.3 Principles for the provision for language of instruction**

- 9.3.1 Where it is a requirement of a statutory or professional accreditation body, a faculty may designate a language of instruction in any given academic year, programme, or module to apply to all campuses.
- 9.3.2 Where more than one language of instruction is prescribed, or choices between the university's four languages of choice are enabled, compliance with the law and the commitment to achieve historical redress by correcting the language imbalances of the past must be kept in mind.
- 9.3.3 A faculty may, subject to the approval of Senate, prescribe a specific language of instruction in selected modules if it is justified on the grounds of being necessary for the realisation of the stated attributes of the graduates of the Faculty concerned, and in such cases, this may apply to all campuses.
- 9.3.4 Provision for designating a language of instruction may be made by a faculty or the Business School, recognising where the demands of the field or market into which graduates will most likely seek employment require that a language or languages be used competently, and in such cases, differentiation between campuses may be possible on the basis that some degree programmes cater for different language-specific markets.

### **9.4 Principles for the provision of interpreting and translation services**

Provision for interpreting and translation services may be made by a faculty in coordination with the SCLPAS and the Language Directorate towards the realisation of multilingualism in its language plan where –

- 9.4.1 it is necessary to operationalise the university's functional multilingual policy;
- 9.4.2 it enables the student to succeed in the transition from the secondary to tertiary education environment;
- 9.4.3 on the basis of the need for alignment of programmes between campuses, parallel medium is not advisable for reasons of diversity, capacity, or where it impacts on alignment to the extent that contact and study hours come to differ within the same programme offered across the three campuses; and where
- 9.4.4 on the basis of a need for inclusion, there are grounds to use interpreting to access more than one language in the teaching-learning environment, including South African Sign Language (SASL), with adequate advance notice.

### **9.5 Principles for the provision of parallel medium of instruction**

- 9.5.1 Provision for parallel medium of instruction may be made where –
  - 9.5.1.1 class size justifies the need to split classes, and where celebrating and embracing diversity can be attained in other ways;
  - 9.5.1.2 capacity of staffing exists and access to a language will support student success; and where
  - 9.5.1.3 sufficient classroom space is available.
- 9.5.2 Where provision of parallel medium of instruction is used, specific interventions must be implemented to ensure integration of the student population attending classes in parallel medium contexts.

### **9.6 Principles for the provision of translanguaging in teaching-learning**

Provision for translanguaging may be made where –

- 9.6.1 staff have been trained adequately in the principles of multilingual pedagogies;
- 9.6.2 students have been identified and trained by staff who are willing to act as facilitators in the class in non-flagship programmes of the university;
- 9.6.3 adequate multilingual study-guides and materials have been developed in non-flagship programmes of the university to support and extend language learning in the relevant languages as made relevant in selected modules in the programme; and

9.6.4 in flagship programmes of the university language facilitators have been appointed, and staff, as well as facilitators, have been trained adequately.

## **9.7 Principles for the provision of flagship African language programme development**

9.7.1 Provision for the designation of flagship programmes per faculty may be made where –

9.7.1.1 it is evident that the field, market and employers will find merit in graduates who show adequate communicative competence in an African language in addition to either English or Afrikaans;

9.7.1.2 consultation with the faculty or Business School has been undertaken, and support obtained from the faculty board; and

9.7.1.3 adequate planning has been done in consultation with the Finance Department for strategic budgetary provision.

9.7.2 Where, subject to the approval of the UMC, a faculty or the Business School is, for well-motivated reasons, not able to identify a flagship programme, provision may be made for the identification of either an additional language stream consisting of modules in sequence from years 1-3 of the curriculum or selected common modules in which Setswana or Sesotho are identified as languages to be used and developed within the programme.

## **10 Language Policy Principles for Administration, Work and the Linguistic Landscape**

The following principles inform this policy as it pertains to administration, work and the linguistic landscape.

### **10.1 General Principles**

10.1.1 The functionally multilingual approach serves as a guiding principle.

10.1.2 The diverse linguistic realities at the different operational levels of the university, as well as due sensitivity towards the language preferences of internal and external stakeholders, are directional for the way in which the University's languages of choice are employed as working languages, languages of administration, internal and external communication, and the linguistic landscape.

10.1.3 The determination of language choice for internal and external communication takes the following factors into consideration:

10.1.3.1 the situation and context of communication;

10.1.3.2 the purpose and future pathway of the communication; and

10.1.3.3 the language needs and levels of language proficiency of the audience.

10.1.4 The implementation of functional multilingualism for working, administrative and linguistic landscape purposes takes place in a systematic and purposeful manner.

10.1.5 By means of a consultative process, and taking due account of the language realities of the NWU, strategies are continually developed, and structures are put in place to implement functional multilingualism as optimally as possible within the workplace.

10.1.6 External and corporate communication takes place in the NWU's languages of choice, determined by the purpose of the communicative event, language needs and language competencies of the audience.

### **10.2 Principles for the provision of multilingualism in formal communication, meetings and events**

10.2.1 Provision for translation and interpreting services for events and meetings may be made where the convening authority has ascertained that such a need exists in terms of the diversity of the audience, and has communicated this in advance of the event or meeting to the Language Directorate.

10.2.2 Approval of the designation of a common language for meetings of statutory bodies of the university is provided by the UMC in accordance with this policy.

10.2.3 Provision for translation and interpreting of both internal and external formal communication by the university is made by the Language Directorate in support of the NWU languages of choice of the NWU and also in support of South African Sign Language where the need arises.

## **11 Language Policy Principles for Research and Development**

The following principles inform this policy as it pertains to the development of multilingualism in research.

- 11.1 Researchers must be encouraged to publish their research results in languages accessible to scholarly peers nationally and internationally.
- 11.2 The choice of language of publication is the prerogative of the researcher, but researchers must be encouraged to take variables such as the purpose of the research report, the putative readership and the target audience into account.
- 11.3 In the quest for creative solutions in a national contribution toward the intellectualisation of African languages, continuous efforts must be made to make research outputs available in more languages.
- 11.4 Doctoral research titles and keywords must be provided in three of the NWU's languages of choice of the NWU.

## **12 Language Policy Principles for Student Life**

The following principles inform this policy as it pertains to the development of multilingualism in student life.

### **12.1 General principles**

- 12.1.1 The linguistic diversity of NWU students must be regarded as an asset that is indispensable for the establishment of a vibrant student experience and an inclusive and diverse student culture.
- 12.1.2 The university must enable student access to full participation in student life and the related co-curricular programmes, activities and events presented by the NWU.
- 12.1.3 Sensitivity for language preferences in vertical and horizontal communication on all campuses must be promoted.
- 12.1.4 Opportunities must be created to assist students in constructive ways to develop and improve their language skills as they pertain to the student engagement and the co-curricular programme, thereby enabling them to enter into their prospective careers.

### **12.2 Language planning principles**

- 12.2.1 Provision must be made for the use of the languages of the NWU in student life with the explicit purpose of promoting the multilingualism of the university through the use of multilingual approaches in meetings, events and communication.
- 12.2.2 The designation of a common language for communication may be agreed upon within specific contexts, including residence life, student leadership structures and events, provided that provision for the multilingualism of the audience is anticipated, either in terms of the language capacities of members of the group to understand, or to help understand each other, or in terms of the support requested from the Language Directorate.

## **13 Principles to be applied by managers for front-line employees for Language Acquisition, Language Management and Quality of Language Usage**

- 13.1 Structures aimed at the improvement of individual multilingual skills and translanguaging pedagogic abilities must be established and maintained across the NWU within the academic, administrative and student life environments in support of enhancing the multilingual competencies of employees and students.
- 13.2 Considering the importance of the quality of spoken and written language usage, a set of practical guidelines must be established to guide and gauge language standards maintained in the university.
- 13.3 Employees and students must be encouraged to broaden their multilingual skills in order to function effectively in different contexts.
- 13.4 Front-line employees at all service points are required to be functionally multilingual.
- 13.5 Awareness raising must take place and workshop opportunities and funding for research projects that investigate the development of functionally multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies must be made available annually to encourage academic employees to hone their teaching and learning approaches for a linguistically diverse student population.

- 13.6 Awareness raising among support services employees must take place, and workshop opportunities and funding for projects aimed at the development of functional multilingualism must be made available to encourage support services employees to hone their multilingual approaches and abilities.
- 13.7 Language editing and translation services must be offered by the Language Directorate, and employees must be encouraged to make use of these services.

## **14 Language Ombud**

- 14.1 A University Language Ombud (ULO) must be established and maintained by the UMC.
- 14.2 The ULO must perform the following functions:
- 14.2.1 providing an accessible reporting point for all employees and students of the university for language queries, complaints and issues;
  - 14.2.2 investigating all language queries and complaints and making recommendations to the UMC for addressing language issues that arise, and
  - 14.2.3 representing the linguistic interests of the university community by proactively promoting the language policy.

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