



## Language Policy of the NWU

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## Language Policy of the NWU

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 22 November 2018 to pursue, accommodate and provide a fair and functionally multilingual language environment across all components of the university

### 1 INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

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

- 1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 1.2 Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997;
- 1.3 The Statute of the North-West University (2017) (“the Statute”), and
- 1.4 policies of the national government relating to language having a binding effect on the higher education sector.

### 2 DEFINITIONS

In this policy and related documents, specifically those referred to in paragraph 3 –

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

“**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 multilingualism**” refers to a language planning programme whereby the different languages used at the NWU are developed and implemented to be as 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 their 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”;

“**target language**” refers to the language 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 learners in their own languages, as well as learning new insights arising from the interpretation of the concept in the target language.

### 3 LANGUAGE PLANS AND GUIDELINES

- 3.1 The University Management Committee (UMC) must, in consultation with the senate adopt and implement a language plan of the NWU which is consistent with this policy and provide guidelines for the implementation thereof.
- 3.2 Each faculty and support department of the university must adopt and implement a language plan in consultation with the UMC and senate which is consistent with this policy and the guidelines contemplated in 3.1.

- 3.3 The UMC is responsible for the management and implementation of the language plans contemplated in 3.1 and 3.2.
- 3.4 The vice-chancellor must annually submit a progress report to council on the implementation of this policy.
- 3.5 The language plans and guidelines must be revised at least once every five years.

#### **4 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

- 4.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide for a deepening engagement with multilingualism at the NWU.
- 4.2 This policy applies to –
  - 4.2.1 teaching-learning, research and innovation,
  - 4.2.2 public communication, meetings, administration, and
  - 4.2.3 formal events associated with the NWU.

#### **5 POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of the NWU –

- 5.1 to provide a consistent and constructive set of guidelines to implement a language policy and plans in compliance with paragraph 7(6) of the Statute;
- 5.2 that the language plans and guidelines associated with this policy must give expression to a commitment to the implementation of the constitutional provisions concerning multilingualism in South Africa;
- 5.3 that, within the parameters of the principle of functional multilingualism English, Setswana, Sesotho and Afrikaans are employed as official languages of the NWU;
- 5.4 that, without diminishment of the use of English and Afrikaans, Setswana and Sesotho must be developed by the university as languages of communication and teaching and learning, and
- 5.5 that the intellectualisation of multilingualism must be viewed as a development concept that needs to be given effect to in an organised and organic manner.

#### **6 POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The language plans and guidelines contemplated in paragraph 3 must be designed to 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 that are 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 language as languages of higher education and administration.

#### **7 MANAGEMENT AND ROLES**

- 7.1 The UMC is responsible for the resourcing, coordination, monitoring and implementation of this policy.
- 7.2 Flagship programmes are monitored by the respective faculty boards.

- 7.3 The Senate Committee for Language Planning and Advisory Services must coordinate and synergise activities in pursuit of the intellectualisation of multilingualism in the domains of teaching and learning and research and must provide expert advice on the development and implementation of planning associated with teaching-learning and research and development as reflected in the language plans and guidelines contemplated in paragraph 3.
- 7.4 The Language Directorate has the mandate to monitor and assess the overall quality of language usage at the NWU, and to devise appropriate procedures for ensuring an appropriate standard for the quality of language usage at the NWU.

## **8 LANGUAGE POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING-LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

### **8.1 General principles**

- 8.1.1 The primary premise of this policy for teaching-learning and assessment is to enhance and optimise access and success and to determine the way in which the university implements functional multilingualism in the teaching and learning environment across all campuses.
- 8.1.2 Not only the language rights of all people concerned must be respected, but the university must prepare citizens for a contemporary South Africa also with a view to enabling full participation in the South African professional and social environments.
- 8.1.3 In the teaching-learning environment the university must ensure that the following parameters are accounted for in a flexible and accommodating way:
- language needs within each of the eight faculties across the university campuses;
  - different markets served by the modes of delivery and teaching programmes; and
  - available infrastructural capacity, including finance and staff.

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

- 8.2.1 Multilingualism and the development and use of African languages in higher education must contribute to the values of the NWU concerning inclusion and also to the quality of selected degree programmes.
- 8.2.2 The development of Setswana and Sesotho particularly with a view to increasing access and enabling success through the use of these languages, must contribute to student academic success, as well as development, and must add value to graduate attributes particularly for professionally oriented programmes offered by the NWU.

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

- 8.3.1 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.
- 8.3.2 Where more than one language of instruction is prescribed, or choices between the four university languages 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.
- 8.3.3 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.
- 8.3.4 Provision for designating a language of instruction may be made by a faculty, 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.

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

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

- 8.4.1 it is necessary to operationalise the university's functional multilingual policy;
- 8.4.2 it enables the student to succeed in the transition from school to university life;
- 8.4.3 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
- 8.4.4 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, in particular also SASL, with adequate advance notice;

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

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

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

Provision for translanguaging may be made where –

- 8.6.1 staff have been trained adequately in the principles of multilingual pedagogies;
- 8.6.2 students have been identified, trained by staff and are willing to act as facilitators in the class in normal (non-flagship) programmes of the university;
- 8.6.3 adequate multilingual study-guides and materials have been developed in normal programmes of the university to support and extend language learning in the relevant languages as made relevant in selected modules in the programme, and
- 8.6.4 in flagship programmes of the university facilitators have been appointed and staff as well as facilitators have been trained adequately.

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

- 8.7.1 Provision for the designation of flagship programmes per faculty may be made where –
  - 8.7.1.1 it is evident that the field, market and employers will find merit in graduates who are multilingual in an African language in addition to either English or Afrikaans;
  - 8.7.1.2 consultation with the faculty has been undertaken, and support obtained from the faculty board, and
  - 8.7.1.3 adequate planning has been done in consultation with the Finance Department for strategic budgetary provision.
- 8.7.2 Where, subject to the approval of the UMC, a faculty 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 year 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.

## **9 LANGUAGE POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR ADMINISTRATION, WORK AND THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE**

### **9.1 General principles**

- 9.1.1 The functionally multilingual approach must serve as guiding principle.
- 9.1.2 The diverse linguistic realities at the different operating levels of the university as well as sensitivity towards the language preferences of internal and external stakeholders must be directional for the way in which the official languages are employed as working languages, languages of administration, internal and external communication and the linguistic landscape.
- 9.1.3 The determination of language choice for internal and external communication must take the following factors into consideration:
- the situation and context of communication;
  - the purpose and future pathway of the communication, and
  - the language needs and levels of language proficiency of interlocutors.
- 9.1.4 The implementation of functional multilingualism for working, administrative and linguistic landscape purposes must take place in a systematic and purposeful manner.
- 9.1.5 By means of a consultative process, and taking due account of the language realities of the NWU, strategies must be continually lobbied and structures put in place to implement functional multilingualism as optimally as possible within the workplace.
- 9.1.6 External and corporate communication must take place in the official languages of the NWU, determined by the purpose of the communicative event, language needs and language competencies of the audience.

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

- 9.2.1 Provision for translation and interpreting for events and meetings may be made where the convening authority has ascertained that such 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.
- 9.2.2 Approval of the designation of a common language for meetings of statutory bodies of the university is made by the UMC in accordance with this policy.
- 9.2.3 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 four languages of the NWU and also in support of sign language where the need arises.

## **10 LANGUAGE POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

- 10.1 Researchers must be encouraged to publish their research results in languages accessible to scholarly peers nationally and internationally.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 In the quest for creative solutions in a national contribution towards the intellectualisation of multilingualism, continuous efforts must be made to make research outputs available in more languages.
- 10.4 Master's and doctoral research titles and key words, and master's and doctoral abstracts must be provided in three of the official languages of the NWU.

## **11 LANGUAGE POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANISED STUDENT LIFE**

### **11.1 General principles**

- 11.1.1 The linguistic diversity of students of the NWU must be regarded as an asset and indispensable for the establishment of an inclusive and vibrant student environment.

- 11.1.2 The NWU must equip students with the necessary language skills to enable them to enter into professional careers.
- 11.1.3 The university must enable optimal access of students to full participation in student life.
- 11.1.4 Sensitivity for language preference in vertical and horizontal communication on all campuses must be promoted.
- 11.1.5 Opportunities must be created to assist students in constructive ways to hone and improve their professional language skills.

## **11.2 Language planning principles**

- 11.2.1 Provision must be made for the use of the languages of the NWU in organised student life with the explicit purpose of promoting the multilingualism of the university through the use of multilingual approaches in meetings, events and student life communication.
- 11.2.2 The designation of a common language for communication may be agreed upon within specific contexts, including residences, committees, societies, 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 help understand each other, or in terms of the support requested from the Language Directorate.

## **12 PRINCIPLES FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, LANGUAGE IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY OF LANGUAGE USAGE**

- 12.1 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 environments in support of enhancing the multilingual competencies of employees and students.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 Employees and students must be encouraged to broaden their multilingual skills in order to function effectively in different contexts.
- 12.4 Front-line employees at all service points are required to be functionally multilingual.
- 12.5 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.
- 12.6 Language editing and translation services must be offered by the Language Directorate and employees must be encouraged to make use of these services.

## **13 LANGUAGE OMBUD**

- 13.1 The UMC must establish a University Language Ombud (ULO).
- 13.2 The office of the ULO must provide an accessible reporting point for all employees and students of the university for language queries, complaints and issues.
- 13.3 The ULO must investigate all language queries and complaints and make recommendations to the UMC for addressing language issues that arise.
- 13.4 The ULO must represent the linguistic interests of the university community by proactively promoting the language policy.

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