



LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Approved by Council 1 September 2006

Introduction

The Higher Education Act of 1997 informs language policy for higher education. The documents *Language in Education Policy (1997)* and the *Language Policy for Higher Education (2002)* set out the framework for the policy development. Under the *Higher Education Act*, and subject to the policy determined by the Minister of National Education, each higher education institution must determine the language policy of each institution and publish such a policy.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal identifies with the goals of South Africa's multilingual language policy and seeks to be a key player in its successful implementation. There is a need to develop and promote proficiency in the official languages, particularly English and isiZulu. The benefits for students becoming proficient in English, the dominant medium of academic communication and of trade and industry internationally, and the *lingua franca* in government and institutions in South Africa, are clear. Proficiency in isiZulu will contribute to nation building and will assist the student in effective communication with the majority of the population of KwaZulu-Natal. This policy seeks to make explicit the benefits of being fully bilingual in South Africa.

The policy for the University makes clear:

- the need to preserve and promote respect for, and proficiency in, the languages referred to in the Constitution, and other languages, including the heritage languages, that facilitate potentially valuable cultural, scientific and economic ties;
- the development of an awareness of multilingualism through an acknowledgement of all the official languages of KwaZulu-Natal, namely isiZulu, English and Afrikaans;
- the need to achieve for isiZulu the institutional and academic status of English;
- the provision of facilities to enable the use of isiZulu as a language of learning, instruction and administration; and
- the need to foster research in language planning and development.

The University will continue to use English as its primary academic language but will activate the development and use of isiZulu as an additional medium of instruction together with the resources (academic and social) that make the use of the language a real possibility for interaction by all constituencies in the University.

1.Rationale

- 1.1 The central function of the University is to generate and impart knowledge, in accordance with the highest international standards, and to add to the store of knowledge by research and cooperation with scholars, nationally and internationally.
- 1.2 At our University, students whose home language is isiZulu form an important and growing language group, reflecting the fact that isiZulu speakers are by far the largest single language group in KwaZulu-Natal. The University therefore has a duty to provide a linguistic and cultural ethos favourable to all students.
- 1.3 The University's capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge in its research and outreach activities is linked to its ability to mobilise isiZulu fully.
- 1.4 IsiZulu is one of the official South African indigenous languages named in the Constitution, whose 'use and status' have been 'historically diminished'. The University, following the Constitution, is bound to 'take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance of the use of isiZulu'. The University is also bound to promote the principle of multilingualism i.e. that all official languages of South Africa enjoy parity of esteem and are treated equitably.
- 1.5 The language policy of the University forms part of a wider interconnected strategy at the national level to promote multilingualism and, at the provincial level, to advance isiZulu.

2. Principles guiding the University's language policy

- 2.1 The University's learning, teaching, and research must continue to be of the highest quality and to be recognised as such nationally and internationally.
- 2.2 The University's language policy is informed by the national and provincial policy requirements.
- 2.3 The language policy is in accordance with the University's vision and mission statement which includes the injunction to promote and foster tolerance and respect for diverse cultural and social values.
- 2.4 The University recognises the value of the English language as an international language of scholarship and the main language of administration and business at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- 2.5 The University equally recognises the importance of isiZulu as a custodian of culture, heritage, and tradition and as a means of communication.
- 2.6 The University recognises the importance of the Afrikaans linguistic and cultural tradition and of the Afrikaans language as a means of communication.
- 2.7 The University recognises that the languages and traditions of the South African population of Indian origin enhance the cultural richness of the Province.
- 2.8 The University intends to develop the use of isiZulu as a language of instruction and communication and it is the responsibility of the Faculties, in consultation with the University Languages Board, to determine and effect the process.
- 2.9 The policy of multilingualism calls for the active cultivation of respect for diversity in language and culture.
- 2.10 University policy on language will be driven by leadership and example.

3. The development of languages of instruction of the University

- 3.1 The University acknowledges the position of English as the dominant language of instruction and believes it will be necessary to work with the status quo while developing isiZulu for use in all higher education functions.
- 3.2 The University will develop isiZulu for use in instruction as part of a medium- to long-term strategy to promote bilingualism. For this purpose the University shall draw up a language plan setting out details of implementation such as time frames and costing.
- 3.3 The promotion of isiZulu for use in instruction will require the development of dictionaries and other teaching and learning materials. To achieve this the University shall work closely with PANSALB, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Arts and Culture.
- 3.4 The successful implementation of the language policy will depend on the injection, over a period of time, of substantial financial resources from the State, as undertaken in the Language Policy for Higher Education.
- 3.5 In order to ensure that language does not act as a barrier to access and success, the University shall provide language and academic literacy development programmes in English and isiZulu.

4. The development of isiZulu and English for academic study and research

- 4.1 The University shall pay particular attention to curriculum development in English and isiZulu.
- 4.2 The University will work in collaboration with the University of Zululand to create a regional platform for the development and study of isiZulu.
- 4.3 The University will encourage research conducted in and through isiZulu.

5. The promotion of multilingualism in institutional policies and practices

- 5.1 The University shall use a similar approach to that proposed for the study of isiZulu and English in clause 4 above to encourage the development and study of other languages, in particular those spoken on the African continent and necessary for the promotion of international trade and tourism, as well as academic and cultural contact.
- 5.2 The University recognises its role in the promotion of multilingualism for social, cultural, intellectual and economic development. This includes other official and other indigenous languages as well as the heritage and foreign languages.
- 5.3 To this end university emblems, public signs and notices and, where appropriate, public ceremonies such as graduation, inaugural lectures and other public functions will be in English and isiZulu.
- 5.4 The languages of administration will be English and isiZulu.
- 5.5 To enhance the knowledge of existing academic and administrative staff the University will provide language courses for staff who do not have English or isiZulu communication skills.

- 5.6 Candidates for posts in the administrative or academic sectors shall be expected to have knowledge of English and isiZulu. Where knowledge of either language is inadequate for the post, there will be provision for access to communication courses as appropriate.

6. Review of Language Policy

This Policy will be reviewed in 2018, at the end of Phase 1 of its implementation, or earlier if deemed necessary.