

RHODES UNIVERSITY

LANGUAGE POLICY

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

DATE OF APPROVAL BY RELEVANT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

DATE OF APPROVAL BY SENATE: 03 October 2005/4 April 2014

DATE OF APPROVAL BY COUNCIL: 06 October 2005/24 April 2014

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01 January 2006

REVISION HISTORY: DATE OF APPROVAL BY SENATE: 4 April 2014

DATE OF APPROVAL BY COUNCIL: 24 April 2014

COMMENCEMENT DATE:

REVISION HISTORY: 1st revision 31 March 2003
2nd revision 2 August 2005
3rd revision 24 April 2014

REVIEW DATE: Every three years

POLICY LEVEL: All University staff and students

RESPONSIBILITY:

As specified in the document

REVIEW AND REVISION: The Language Policy as a whole will be reviewed by the Language Committee every three years. The RULC will solicit reports from Academic Departments, Schools, Units, Institutes, Divisions and Deans.

REPORTING STRUCTURE: Language Committee → Equity and Institutional Culture → Senate → Council

PREAMBLE

This review of the policy is based on a campus-wide survey and the recommendations of the Language Committee in 2013.

In line with Section 6 of the Constitution of 1996, with the 2012 Use of Official Languages Act and with the guidelines laid down by the Council on Higher Education, this Policy is concerned with the development and promotion of respect for all languages used by South Africans, and in particular, with the equitable use of the official provincial languages at Rhodes University.

The policy recognises that South Africa is a multilingual country and that Rhodes University reflects this multilingual diversity. It also recognises that language has the potential to contribute to transformation in various ways. The policy therefore seeks to facilitate exploring the ways this could occur at Rhodes through dynamic, collaborative partnerships and approaches to language use and the awareness of language issues in higher education.

The policy supports English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) but is also committed to simultaneously promoting multilingualism, a possible paradox that has to be carefully managed.

The policy is committed to the intellectualisation of African languages and creating the conditions for the use of particularly isiXhosa as a language of learning and eventually also teaching.

This policy is intended to be a living document which continually responds to the University language needs and may require regular revision.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 POLICY DECLARATION:

The Language Policy of Rhodes University is predicated on the following principles. The University is committed:

- To accord equal esteem to all official languages and developing and promoting all official languages in South Africa;
- To ensuring that language should not act as a barrier to equity of access, opportunity and success;
- To promoting multilingualism and the intellectualisation of African languages, and
- To creating the conditions for the use of particularly isiXhosa as a language of learning and eventually also teaching;
- To widely distributing this policy to all members of the University community, and including it in appropriate form in the University Calendar and on the University website. Deans and Heads of Departments, Schools, Centres, Institutes and Units

and Administrative Divisions will be required to discuss the policy with academic and support staff.

The University will seek to adopt a wide range of strategies that will enhance its multilingual character.

In the light of historical conditions and contemporary realities, in the foreseeable future:

- The University's language of Learning and Teaching will be English (except in academic departments where languages other than English are taught as subjects);
- The University official business will be conducted in English;
- The official language of record at Rhodes University will be English;
- Selected signage on campus will be trilingual in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

2.2 POLICY GOALS:

The policy goals of the University are:

- Promoting multilingualism and sensitivity in language usage in a way that creates and fosters a supportive, inclusive and non-discriminatory environment in which all members of the University can feel they belong;
- Promoting and supporting academic literacy and proficiency in English as the LoLT for all students;
- Promoting the intellectualisation of isiXhosa, as part of redressing the previous marginalisation of indigenous languages;
- Promoting, as institutionally agreed and when feasible the study of foreign languages;
- Ensuring that while the language of wider communication within the university community is English, translation and interpreting into isiXhosa and Afrikaans is provided for students and staff where necessary and feasible.

2.3 DEFINITIONS:

Academic literacy: The ability to demonstrate membership of an academic community by reading, writing and thinking in ways that are congruent with the values and attitudes of that community. It is the responsibility of the University to induct students into a discipline-specific language register and to foster proficiency in that register.

Foreign language: A language which is not indigenous to South Africa, which is not official according to the Constitution and which is not widely spoken in South Africa.

Multilingualism: A linguistic capacity that extends across more than two languages. Sensitivity to multilingualism in the higher education context requires an awareness of the cognitive processes of a foreign or second-language speaker in the learning process.

3. POLICY

A. The Promotion of Multilingualism and of Sensitivity in Language Usage

The entire Rhodes University community undertakes to foster and encourage an awareness of and sensitivity towards the multilingual nature of the institution in order to enhance teaching and learning, promote mutual understanding, and enhance communication at all levels. The Rhodes University Language Committee (RULC) will organise awareness campaigns, colloquia, conferences and other activities to support this. In addition to the responsibility of the community as a whole, specific institutional entities will play key roles in promoting multilingualism, as indicated in the Implementation Guidelines.

B. The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

In order to ensure that language does not act as a barrier to equity and access and success for students from different linguistic backgrounds, Rhodes University aims to strengthen existing structures and put additional measures into place to improve academic literacy in the LoLT. These structures and measures shall embrace the value of multilingualism and the need to utilise mother-tongue languages in the process of developing academic literacy

The language of learning, teaching and of assessment will be English, except in academic departments where languages other than English are taught as subjects.

C. Continued Support for South African Languages

Rhodes University will, as institutionally agreed and feasible, strive to maintain academic programmes in various South African languages, including specifically English and isiXhosa. The University aims to strengthen the status of isiXhosa by promoting its value as a medium of communication among academic and support staff. Teaching and learning at the University takes place within an inclusive teaching and learning environment which recognises English as the primary LoLT, and seeks to develop isiXhosa as a language to support the LoLT.

D. Support for the Study of Foreign Languages

Recognising the multilingual global, national, and institutional contexts within which it functions, Rhodes University will strive to ensure, as institutionally agreed and feasible, various foreign-language programmes.

3.2 REVIEW PROCEDURE

The RULC will as part of the review process survey Faculties, Academic Departments, Schools, Centres, Institutes, Units and Administrative Divisions. University-wide

discussions of policy and practice will also form part of the review. The RULC will collate findings and recommendations and submit these to the Equity and Institutional Culture Committee, Senate and Council for consideration.

4. IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Rhodes University Language Committee (RULC) will monitor and review the implementation of the Rhodes University Language Policy.
- The Director of Equity and Institutional Culture will collaborate with Deans, Heads of Departments, Institutes, Centres, Units and Administrative Divisions to ensure in the implementation of the policy in their respective areas.

A. The Promotion of Multilingualism and Sensitivity in Language Usage

Academic Departments will be requested to:

- Maintain existing and/or develop new strategies to improve academic literacy;
- Be sensitive to possible linguistic demographics when allocating first-years to tutorials and aim for bilingual tutor support wherever possible and appropriate;
- Consider training tutors to facilitate use of multiple languages in tutorials and other peer learning sessions;
- Make multiple copies of appropriate dictionaries accessible in the library;
- Where appropriate, provide access to a wider range of dictionaries in examinations and;
- Ensure that the use of teaching aids is sensitive to multilingualism;
- Encourage constructive debate amongst staff and students about bilingualism, multilingualism and the role of language in learning.

CHERTL will be requested:

- To sensitise staff and students about the need to counteract possible sexism or racism in the language employed in materials for teaching, assessment, research, and in academic and everyday usage;
- Continue to support the use of the Trojan Academic Initiative (TAI) mentoring programme and other such programmes in order to promote opportunities for inter-lingual contact, where appropriate;
- Devise strategies (including, for example, the use of alternative means of testing such as the National Benchmark Tests) to attract students from all linguistic groups with sufficient academic potential to succeed, and to place them in appropriate academic programmes within the institution;
- Raise awareness in formal courses such as the PGDip (HE) and the Assessors' Course of teaching strategies which support students who speak different languages and;
- Establish appropriate programmes to ensure that new lecturers receive exposure to methods and techniques for teaching students who speak different languages and

that existing staff are also provided such exposure.

The Infrastructure, Operations and Finance Division/RULC/Naming Committee will be requested to:

- Where possible, facilitate and co-ordinate the progressive replacement of existing signage on campus with appropriate multilingual signage.

The Registrar's Division/Communications & Marketing Division will be requested to:

- Where possible, ensure that official University branding and correspondence with prospective and current students, staff and the public is available on request in at least two of the major provincial languages.

The Communications & Marketing Division/Student Representative Council will be requested to:

- Where necessary and feasible use interpreters and translators to make verbal and written presentations regarding certain policies or issues in the University; Explore the use of isiXhosa and Afrikaans on the Rhodes website;
- Explore the potential of using *Rhodos*, Rhodes Music Radio, *Activate* and other student media to communicate in languages other than English.

The Human Resources Division will:

- Where appropriate, pursue staff employment policies and strategies which ensure that successful applicants are ideally multilingual and have the required linguistic abilities, especially in areas such as, for example, counselling and support;
- Where necessary, notify selection committees of the need for interpreters;
- Where necessary engage with Unions concerning the translation of selected policies.

B. Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and Assessment

In order to support the development of academic literacy CHERTL will be requested to:

- Offer support to staff in the development of curricula, the construction of personal teaching portfolios and the optimal identification of valid and reliable assessment strategies so as to ensure that literacy development is facilitated and that the assessment of language use is valid and appropriately weighted;
- Promote and support the creation of initiatives and materials that support the development of academic literacy.

Academic Faculties, Schools and Departments will be requested to:

- Continuously evaluate the extent to which curriculum and teaching-learning methods are appropriate for those for whom English is an additional language as well as the extent to which they facilitate the students' ability to use English as the language of learning and teaching;

- Explore ways in which African languages can be used as resources in meaning-making in relation to disciplinary knowledge, for example through compiling multilingual glossaries;
- Where appropriate and practicable, allow and facilitate the writing and examination of theses in languages other than English.

The Registrar's Division, Data Management Unit, RULC will be requested to:

- Carry out an annual survey during registration to ascertain the linguistic demography of the university.

C. Support for South African Languages

The Registrar's Division, Communications and Marketing Division and Infrastructure, Operations & Finance Division will:

- Where feasible, annotate key documents (e.g. application forms, bursary forms etc.) by providing addenda with explanatory notes in isiXhosa and/or Afrikaans;
- Progressively, provide multilingual signage for significant University buildings.

The Human Resources Division will be requested to:

- Devise strategies to encourage members of the University who do not speak isiXhosa to enrol for the short communicative course in isiXhosa offered by the African Languages Studies Section of the School of Languages;
- Ensure that advertisements for vacant positions indicate that competence in more than one official language will be a recommendation.