



VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

The following information to be completed by the policy custodian

Title	The Language Policy of the Vaal University of Technology
Approving authority	Rectorate
Field of application	Language Policy
Compliance to	All staff members
New or revised policy	Revised: June 2016
Last date of approval	SENATE November 2016
Next review date (initiated by policy owner/custodian)	September 2017
Title of manager responsible for policy review	Vice-Chancellor and Principal
Title of manager responsible for monitoring implementation of this policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Research
Stakeholders consulted	Academic staff, non-academic staff, students, Institutional Forum, and Senate (questionnaires, institutional workshop, focus-group interviews, internal and external stakeholder language colloquium, benchmarking against HEIs in SA and abroad, and discussions at Faculty Board meetings)
Cross-reference	The Language Policy of the Vaal University of Technology is the overarching Policy of the Institution
Language edited	Yes
Scrutinised by a legal person	Yes

Preamble

In the execution of its language policy, the Vaal University of Technology strives to recognise the rich diversity of the South African nation as reflected in the acknowledgement of the eleven official languages subsumed in the Constitution of South Africa.

The language policy of the Vaal University of Technology was developed through

- consultation with various internal and external stakeholders;
- national and international external benchmarking;
- looking at developments and trends in higher education; and
- considering national directives.

From a historical and practical perspective English remains the starting point, but the long-term objective of the language policy of the Vaal University of Technology is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning through multilingualism.

A survey conducted in 2011 indicated that the Vaal University of Technology is characterised by a broad range of diversity in terms of student first languages, with almost all the official languages being represented. The three largest language groups on campus are Sesotho, Northern Sotho and Zulu, which together make up only half of the total student body. Nevertheless, Sesotho and Afrikaans have been chosen as preferred languages from a language usage and development perspective because these are the two most widely spoken languages of the Southern Gauteng region. Consequently, the multilingualism at the Vaal University of Technology will be focussed on English, Sesotho and Afrikaans.

Glossary of terminology

Multilingual refers to the ability to use more than one language, as well as the ability to use and tolerate the use of more than one language.

First language generally refers to the first language acquired by a speaker (mother tongue), but in multilingual countries where speakers of one language may gradually shift to using another language, first language may refer to the language that a person feels most comfortable using.

Second language refers to a language that is pervasively used within a region, but is not the first language of the wider population, i.e. the *lingua franca*.

First-year students at the Vaal University of Technology are considered those students who are registered for the first time at the institution. They may be registered for their first year of undergraduate studies, or they may have studied elsewhere and are registered for the first time at the university as undergraduate or postgraduate students.

New student refers to a student who is either a newly registered first-time student at a tertiary institution or a student who is new to a particular course. The latter may either be a student who changed from one course to another within the university, or may have studied elsewhere and is a newly registered Vaal University of Technology student.

A **diagnostic test** is designed to determine what skills a person has or what he/she knows or does not know. Diagnostic tests may, for example, be used to establish the language proficiency of a person before beginning a language course.

Language of teaching and learning is the language used in tuition.

LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

1 Language policy statement

This language policy is a working document and as such is subject to change. For the present, while the university recognises the need to move towards multilingualism and will take steps through this policy towards that end, English is the only language used for teaching and learning as well as for general administration.

2 Clarification

2.1 Languages used for tuition

English is the main language used for tuition. All courses will be offered in English, but tutoring and learning materials will be available in Sesotho and Afrikaans as well. The long-term aim is to develop Sesotho and Afrikaans as languages of teaching and learning at the Vaal University of Technology.

2.2 Languages used for examinations, tests and assignments

English is used for assessment which includes, among other things, compiling examination and test question papers, memorandums, instructions for assignments and students' answer sheets, as well as for conducting oral assessment and presentations. Multilingual assessment will be possible once Sesotho and Afrikaans have been established as languages of teaching and learning.

2.3 Languages used for study material

English will be used for all study and learner guides, readers, book lists, project instructions, directives, and supplemental and other class notes or study material. Study materials will also be available in Sesotho and Afrikaans for tutoring purposes. The long-term aim is to develop all study materials in in Sesotho and Afrikaans as part of the development of these languages as languages of teaching and learning at the Vaal University of Technology.

2.4 Languages used for external communication

English with translation in Sesotho and Afrikaans (when necessary) is the official language of the institution. The Vaal University of Technology should adhere to the following principles:

- All written communication must be in English, with translation in Sesotho and Afrikaans.
- Observe language etiquette – for example, when necessary and where reasonably practicable, answer in the language of the sender.
- Keep the target group in mind.

2.5 Languages used for internal communication

English, with translation in Sesotho and Afrikaans when necessary, is the official language of the institution. The Vaal University of Technology should adhere to the following principles:

- All written communication must be in English;
- Observe language etiquette - for example, when necessary and where reasonably practicable, answer in the language of the sender.
- Keep the target group in mind.
- Where reasonably practicable, staff and students may communicate amongst themselves in the language or languages of their choice.
- Where reasonably practicable, translation services may be made available in formal communication e.g. in meetings etc.

2.6 Monitoring of language policy and planning at the Vaal University of Technology

Language planning and policy making is a continuous process. In its endeavours to maintain multilingualism and to guide the university community in doing so, it is proposed that the university establish a Language Development and Service Unit within the Centre for Academic Development.

This Language Development and Service Unit must have representation in Senate and its long-term and ultimate aim must be to promote the principle of functional multilingualism as endorsed in the Constitution of South Africa. The Language Development and Service Unit should comprise several units which will assume responsibility for the implementation and operational management of the language policy of the Vaal University of Technology. It should therefore offer a hubs and spokes model for African language development through a centralised model in the Centre of Academic Development while also providing African language

development support in the faculties through translation services in lectures, meetings and study materials.

It is proposed that the Language Development and Service Unit consist of three units, namely the Diagnostic Sub Unit, the Language Service Support Sub Unit including the writing lab, and the Foreign Language Liaison Sub Unit (see below) be established in the Centre of Academic Development. All these units including the writing lab will report to a manager of Language Development who will be employed and housed in the African Language Development building. A language committee will be established to ensure appropriate governance and advocacy within the institution. This committee should be representative of all faculties and stakeholders. The service units in the Centre of Academic Development must be readily accessible to staff and students and should include, but not be limited to, the following:

2.6.1 Diagnostic Unit

- English, Sesotho and Afrikaans language proficiency testing of staff and students;
- an all-skill English, Sesotho and Afrikaans multimedia laboratory for staff to improve language use, vocabulary building, reading speed and reading and comprehension skills; and
- an all-skill multilingual language resource area that will be used for improving reading, listening and speaking skills in other languages, especially languages that are widely spoken on campus.

An academic literacy specialist with qualifications in second language acquisition who will be employed alongside language specialist with a teaching qualification at a postgraduate level in the above mentioned second languages.

2.6.2 Language Service Support Unit

- Editing and proofreading of proposals, dissertations, theses, publications, presentations, examination papers, tests, and study material;
- editing, translating and proofreading aimed at institutional image building and branding, e.g. before distribution or publication of Council, Senate and Executive Management minutes and annual reports;
- offering of language short courses to all stakeholders;
- developing multilingual study material;

- offering of second language (English, Sesotho and Afrikaans) induction and awareness programmes to newly appointed and current staff; and
- nurturing linguistic diversity as institutional culture through actively managing cultural and language activities via debates, public speaking and the performing arts;
- initiating and establishing direct and continuous liaison with Government;
- establishing medium- and long-term goals to advance the English, Sesotho and Afrikaans language planning and development process;
- establishing medium and long-term goals to advance the multilingualism planning and development process;
- communicating the institutional language policy in an institutional publication available to all stakeholders; and
- reviewing the institutional language policy every five years.

An academic literacy specialist with qualifications in second language acquisition will be employed alongside a language specialist with a teaching qualification at a postgraduate level in the above-mentioned second languages. Language editors will be employed in the unit to meet the demands as stipulated above.

2.6.3 Foreign Language Liaison Unit

- Liaising with international partners/governments and embassies; and
- Offering foreign language short courses meeting the needs of international students.

A language specialist with a teaching qualification at a postgraduate level in the above- mentioned foreign language will be employed.

2.7 Department of African Languages

Furthermore, the university must endeavour to establish an African Language Development Department with the aim of offering undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in, amongst others, Sesotho and Afrikaans. This department should be affiliated to the Faculty of Education so that it can contribute to the training of teachers that are empowered to teach pupils in their mother tongue. Through the offering of formal qualifications this department will also contribute to the development of Sesotho and Afrikaans as fully fledged languages of teaching and learning at the Vaal University of Technology.