



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

6 February 2006

Dear Colleagues and Students

Review of the language policy

Welcome back on campus!

An important matter on the agenda of the University for this year is the review of the language policy (and the concomitant language plan). The current policy, which was approved by Council in December 2002, and which we implemented from 2003, stipulates that it should come up for review after three years. It is time now to do so.

You are probably aware of the public debate late last year on the decision by the Faculty Board of Arts to extend the T option to second- and third-year modules in the Faculty. This decision was ratified by an overwhelming majority of Council during its meeting on 15 December 2005. This followed after the Faculty Board unanimously re-affirmed its proposal, and a thorough debate and vote by Senate.

In contrast to 2002, when there was an equally extensive public debate on language at SU, we now do not have to redesign the policy from scratch. A language policy is in place (<http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Taal/taalbeleid2004.doc>), we have the necessary structures, such as the Language Committee and Language Centre, we have the required expertise within those structures, and we have a Code of Conduct for Language in the Classroom (<http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Taal/gedragkode.doc>).

At the university language is an academic matter. Since the acceptance of the current language policy the executive responsibility for its implementation has been vested in the Vice-Rector (Teaching). With all the relevant structures within his jurisdiction, or those at his disposal, the review of the language policy can best be done within the line function of the Vice-Rector (Teaching).

After discussion and consultation on this matter – also taking into consideration other important aspects regarding teaching and learning, student involvement, communication, and an approach to tackle and execute the task in terms of project management principles – I have appointed a language task group to undertake the revision of the language policy as a project for 2006. The project owner is the Vice-Rector (Teaching), Prof Russel Botman, and the project leader is the Director of the Language Centre, Prof. Leon de Stadler. The other members of the task group are: Prof Anton van Niekerk (professor in Philosophy and chairperson of the Language Committee); Dr Brenda Leibowitz (Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning); Dr Edna van Harte (Dean of Students); Mr Mohamed Shaikh (Manager: Communication) and Mr Kobus Ehlers (vice-chair of the Students' Representative Council). The task group has already met and is in the process of refining its terms of reference. Dr Barbara Pool, (Manager: Projects) will handle the project management, and expertise in other fields will be sought as deemed necessary. This may include co-optation. The Institutional Planning Division will be involved in the development of measuring instruments and the quantitative aspects of the review of language practices. The process will be conducted bilingually in Afrikaans and English to ensure that all interest groups can follow and participate in the process as and when required.

To ensure good academic engagement, especially with faculties via the deans, I have requested that language revision should be a standing item on the agenda of the Executive Committee of Senate. Members of staff are welcome to make submissions via faculty structures or their areas of responsibility, and students via the Students' Representative Council or the Academic Affairs Council.

In the spirit of transparency and participation the language task group will continuously liaise with a broader Reference Group regarding relevant aspects of the language policy. We intend to constitute this group by invitation to a broad representation of the statutory bodies of the University, the campus community, experts and interested parties in the greater context of the University's academic functions: learning and teaching,

research and community interaction. We want to create the opportunity for input and submissions by the public, as well.

Our point of departure is to proactively communicate with our internal and external role players in order to keep them informed on the progress being made with the project. With this in mind, I have appointed the Vice-Rector (Teaching), Prof. Russel Botman, as Stellenbosch University's official Language Spokesperson.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the language review process does not mean that the language policy in its current form has been suspended – of course, making allowance for decisions by Senate and Council since 2002. This also applies to the use of the language specifications in the classroom. I appeal to all students and staff to honour the decisions we have reached at the end of 2005 in the spirit of the Code of Conduct for Language in the Classroom.

Should any significant deviations emerge in this regard in the lecture halls, the University has the necessary academic structures at its disposal to address such instances. Prof Botman will further deal with this matter. If academic structures cannot address problems with regard to language adequately, staff and students are fully entitled – as in any other university matter – to refer the issue to the Ombudsman of the University. Her details are: Ms Letitia Snyman, on 082 807 2994 or (021) 808-2750, alternatively by e-mail at ombudsman@sun.ac.za Her office is situated in Murray Street, Stellenbosch.

We can expect lively public interest in the process of reviewing the language policy: to such an extent that we have learnt that *Die Burger* intends sending journalists to classes unannounced to observe our teaching. Other groups or individuals may want to do the same. Our position is that we have nothing to hide, and that we rely on our students and staff to act in the best interest of the university and our academic task. Any policy of the University, including the language policy, should serve our academic purpose, which is our core business.

The university has taken important decisions on language over the past years by means of the academic decision-making processes to which we are accustomed and in which we trust. We are going to do it again this year. I am sure that it will take us as an academic institution another step forward. I would like to thank you in advance for your participation in the process.

With regards and best wishes for the year ahead.



Prof Chris Brink
Rector and Vice-Chancellor

Chris Brink
Rektor en Visekanselier • Rector and Vice-Chancellor
Universiteit van Stellenbosch • Stellenbosch University

Stellenbosch 7602 • Suid-Afrika/South Africa • Tel: +27-(0)21 808-4654 • Faks/ Fax : +27 (0)21 808-3714
E-pos/ Email: chrisbrink@sun.ac.za • Web: <http://www.sun.ac.za/rektor>