

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**NOTICE 455 OF 2021****USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT, 2012 (ACT NO. 12 OF 2012)****THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING REVISED
LANGUAGE POLICY**

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in terms of section 4(2)(h) of the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012), hereby publish the revised Department of Higher Education and Training Language Policy for public knowledge.



Dr BE Nzimande, MP

Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

Date: 31/03/2021

**higher education
& training**

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

LANGUAGE POLICY

Policy Custodian	Corporate Communication
Policy Version	Version 2
Approval Date	Date of signature by Director General
Implementation Date	After policy has been gazetted
Status of Policy	Policy review
Author	Directorate Communication

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUBJECT	PAGE
1. ACRONYMS	2
2. DEFINITIONS	2
3. BACKGROUND	3
4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK	4
5. PURPOSE	5
6. OBJECTIVES	5
7. SCOPE OF APPLICATION	6
8. KEY PRINCIPLES	6
9. USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	6
10. LANGUAGE USE FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION	8
11. LANGUAGE USE FOR EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION	9
12. COMMUNICATION WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	9
13. LANGUAGE UNIT	10
14. OPERATING PROCEDURE	10
15. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	11
16. ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION	11
17. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	11
18. REVIEW	11
ANNEXURE A : IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	13

1. ACRONYMS

ACRONYMS	DEFINITION
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DG	Director-General
DLPS	Directorate: Language Practice Services
CIO	Chief Information Officer
IRC	Information Resources Centre
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board

2. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Act	Use of Official Languages Act No. 12 of 2012
Constitution	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
Department	Department of Higher Education and Training
Official languages	Languages as contemplated in Section 6(1) of the constitution, namely Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.
Policy	DHET Language Policy

3. BACKGROUND

The Department of Higher Education and Training Language Policy, fulfills the prescripts of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), amplified in the Use of Official Languages Act No.12 of 2012. The Constitution provides for recognition and use of eleven (11) official languages.

The Use of Official Languages Act No.12 of 2012 provides for, amongst other requirements, the regulation and monitoring of the use of official languages by national government for government purposes; requires the adoption of language policies for establishment of departmental language units by national government departments, national public entities and national public enterprises; and it provides for the establishment of a national language unit by the Department of Arts and Culture.

The Act came into operation on 02 May 2013 by Proclamation No. 10 published in Government Gazette No. 36392 of 26 April 2013. The Regulations to the Act came into effect on 5 February 2014 through Government Notice No. 10140 promulgated in Government Gazette No. 37398 of 28 February 2014.

In order for the Department to deliver on its mandate of providing national strategic leadership in support of the Post-School Education and Training system to all citizens of the Republic of South Africa, the Department commits to the recognition of all official languages.

Although most South Africans speak an indigenous African language as their mother tongue, they often defer to English or Afrikaans for business, education and even politics.

Government departments, public entities and public enterprises need to acknowledge the importance of languages in South Africa. According to the latest census in the country, English still remain the dominant language in domains such as government, even though the majority of South Africans speak indigenous languages.

The DHET is therefore no exception, currently the Department uses English as the main language of business, starting from meetings to documents, publications and communication, etc.

The other languages are therefore not given the same status as English and the incorporation of other languages into the programmes and business of the Department is not prioritized financially.

The DHET currently does not have a language unit or language practitioners who would assist with the promotion of multilingualism in the Department.

Through the development of a language policy, the Department will ensure that these official languages enjoy parity of esteem and equitable treatment through and in all its communication and interaction with communities and individuals.

The Department takes into consideration the multilingual diversity of South Africa and that promoting multilingualism will become the tool through which to break the linguistic systematic exclusions and to enhance access to information and services. The Department recognizes that this Language Policy will promote inclusivity and that language should not be a barrier to information and service delivery access.

If implemented successfully, this language policy will result in the recognition and usage of the previously marginalized languages in the day to day business of the Department.

4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.1 This policy is developed in accordance with requirements of **Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 2016**, and, particularly Section 4 of the Use of Official Languages Act No. 12 of 2012.

4.1.1 The Constitution provides for recognition and use of eleven (11) official languages. Further, recognises the diminished use and inferior status of indigenous languages, therefore requiring government departments to take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and use of indigenous languages. In addition, the Constitution requires all official languages to be afforded parity of esteem and equitable treatment.

4.1.2 Section 6(3) of the Constitution empowers national and provincial governments to use any particular official languages for purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and balance of needs and preferences of the population.

4.2 The **Use of Official Languages Act No. 2 of 2012**, provides for, amongst other requirements, the regulation and monitoring of the use of official languages by national government for government purposes; requires the adoption of a language policy and provides for the establishment of a national language unit by the department. Sub-section 4(1) requires that a national department and its entities must adopt a language policy on the use of all official languages.

4.3 Further, that the DHET complies with requirements of sub-section 4(4.2 (b)) which requires that the DHET must adopt at least three official languages

4.4 In addition, the policy is also guided by the following legislative instruments:

4.4.1 **Promotion of Access to Information Act , 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000)**, which gives effect to the constitutional right of access to data and information held by the State that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. It provides a framework for requesting such data and information. The Act aims to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public and private bodies, and to actively promote a society in which the people of South Africa have effective

access to information. In promoting access to information, the Act also recognizes the use of official languages by allowing requesters to state their language of preference when requesting records. Furthermore it directs public bodies to compile their section 14 manuals in at least three official languages.

4.4.2 The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system, approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2013.

The White Paper takes cognisance of the demise of African Languages in the academic space has posed a serious threat to linguistic diversity in South Africa. It recognizes the importance of developing and elevating the status and advancing the use of all South African languages including Sign Language.

5. PURPOSE

5.1 The purpose of the policy is to promote the use of official languages, the spirit of multilingualism and social cohesion, as well as to empower previously marginalised languages in the DHET. The language policy of the DHET seeks to give guidance on how language matters should be applied in order to comply with the Constitution and the Act as well as to enhance communication and information provision to the citizens.

5.2 This policy further outlines the reasonable steps that the DHET takes to ensure meaningful access to its services and activities by all citizens of the Republic of South Africa.

6. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy, based on Section 2 of the Use of Official Languages Act No.12 of 2012, are:

- 6.1 to promote and elevate the status of the previously marginalised official indigenous languages.
- 6.2 to promote equitable use of official languages in the day to day business of the DHET.
- 6.3 to promote good language management by DHET for efficient public service administration and to meet the needs of the public.
- 6.4 to protect language diversity and respect for multilingualism.
- 6.5 to promote parity of esteem and equitable treatment of official languages in the Republic of South Africa;
- 6.6 to facilitate equitable access to DHET services and information; and

6.7 to encourage compliance with the Use of Official Languages Act No. 12 of 2012 by the DHET;

7. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

7.1 This policy applies to all employees of the national office of the DHET and its Regional Offices, for both internal and external interaction.

7.2 Public higher education institutions, Technical Vocational Education and Training colleges as well as Community Education and Training colleges should, with necessary changes, align their respective language policies with this policy.

7.3 The Director-General (DG) is the Information Officer of the DHET, and therefore the overseer of the implementation of this policy by staff within the DHET.

7.4 Heads of DHET institutions must ensure the adoption and use of official languages in line with this policy and when required, report to the DG on the status of the use of official languages within the institutions.

8. KEY PRINCIPLES

8.1 **Inclusivity:** Promote inclusiveness and social cohesion, while guarding against exclusivity and marginalization.

8.2 **Transformation:** Transformative in attending to historical injustices, recognizing the diminished use and status of indigenous languages and promote justice and equality.

8.3 **Value:** Recognize the intrinsic value of the diverse range of linguistic backgrounds that the public and employees bring to the Department.

8.4 **Multilingualism:** Promote multilingualism in all South African languages.

8.5 **Sustainability:** Be sustainable and practicable within the context of the Department's financial, staffing and infrastructural resources.

9. USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The application of this policy takes into account the language needs and cultural dynamics at national level and provincial contexts as outlined in 9.1 and in Table 1.

The following factors have been taken into consideration in arriving at the choice of official languages the DHET will use in each context/situation:

- Usage;
- Practicability;
- Expense;
- Regional circumstances; and
- The balance of the needs and preferences of the public it serves.

The official languages for DHET head office are:

- **English**
- **Sepedi and**
- **isiZulu**

9.1 Regional offices must use at **least three** official languages taking into consideration the language distribution in each province (see Table 1 below)

9.2 All the three official languages will enjoy the same status and treatment and any of them can be used for recording purposes with translations into the other two languages when required.

9.3 The DHET will make provision for the use of the South African Sign Language for citizens that requires services in this language.

TABLE 1

A. PROVINCE	B. LANGUAGES USED
Gauteng	English; Setswana; and isiZulu South African Sign Language
Mpumalanga	English; Sepedi Xitsonga; IsiNdebele; and siSwati South African Sign Language
Free State	English; Sesotho; and Afrikaans South African Sign Language
Northern Cape	English; Sesotho; and Afrikaans

A. PROVINCE	B. LANGUAGES USED
	South African Sign Language
Eastern Cape	English; IsiXhosa; and Afrikaans Sesotho South African Sign Language
Western Cape	English; Afrikaans; and IsiXhosa South African Sign Language
North West	English; Setswana; and Afrikaans South African Sign Language
Limpopo	English; Sepedi; Xitsonga; and Tshivenda South African Sign Language
KwaZulu-Natal	English; isiZulu and isiXhosa South African Sign Language

9.4 Notwithstanding the above languages, the DHET will also use other official languages as and when required.

9.5 The importance of the service which the DHET provides to the public is self-evident. Accordingly, the DHET takes all measures possible to provide language services sufficient to ensure that all citizens of the Republic enjoy comparable access to its services.

10. LANGUAGE USE FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

10.1 The languages used for written internal communication in the DHET shall be isiZulu, Sepedi and English. Where a document is originally produced in English, it shall be translated into isiZulu and Sepedi and the other way round.

10.2 Documents shall also be originated in isiZulu or Sepedi, with a view to elevate the status of these languages and to promote multilingualism.

10.3 In conducting meetings, members of the meeting should agree on the language that should be

used, taking into consideration the language distribution of the members as well as language understanding. The choice of a language should not be used to exclude any member.

- 10.4 Where needed, interpreting services shall be provided for meetings to ensure that no member is excluded on account of language.
- 10.5 Records of meetings and of any other official engagements shall be kept in the language it was conducted in and translated to the other two languages.

11. LANGUAGE USE FOR EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- 11.1 DHET, in its spoken communication will as far as possible strive to serve all their clients in the language of their choice amongst the eleven official languages.
- 11.2 During engagement with citizens, such as imbizo, the languages spoken in the area will be prioritized as the languages of communication. Departmental publications, policies, forms, notices and adverts that are exclusively intended for public use will be translated into regional languages as outlined in Table 1 above.
- 11.3 Promotional material and information such as campaign products shall be made available in official languages based on the geographical area.
- 11.4 When providing services to citizens through the DHET Call Centre, they will be given an option to choose a preferred language of communication from the eleven official languages.
- 11.5 Training will be provided to call centre and client services agents in all the eleven official languages, including South African Sign Language.

12. COMMUNICATION WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- 12.1 The DHET will strive to provide for the needs of people with special language needs.
- 12.2 At first contact with members of the public, the designated staff members of the DHET will inform the individual that the DHET will provide an interpreter in South African Sign Language or any other official language other than those chosen by the Department.
- 12.3 The DHET will on request provide for South African Sign Language interpretation services to facilitate communication with the people with hearing disabilities.
- 12.4 A citizen who wishes to communicate in South African Sign Language with DHET, must notify the Department in at least 4 hours in advance, before a physical visit.
- 12.5 The Department will train its front line staff on the South African Sign Language so they can provide immediate assistance on basic and simple requests.
- 12.6 The Department will also enter into partnerships with Organizations for the Deaf to provide South African Sign Language interpreters on call for more complex requests.

- 12.7 Individuals or groups requiring assistance in languages other than those nominated are required to apply for assistance to the Director-General ten (10) office days in advance of engagement with the Department.

13. LANGUAGE UNIT

- 13.1 The Department shall establish a Language Unit, as required by the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012.
- 13.2 This Language unit shall play a central role in ensuring the sustained use of the official languages as required by the language policy.
- 13.3 The Language Unit shall strive to elevate the status of the previously marginalized languages by providing services such as translation, interpretation, terminology development, etc
- 13.4 In order to promote multilingualism, the Department may revive the language learning programme which will provide a platform for colleagues to learn each other's languages.
- 13.5 The Head of Language Unit shall be responsible for facilitating the adoption, use of official languages, monitoring and redress where required.
- 13.6 The Language unit shall be responsible for the implementation and administration of this language policy.

14. OPERATING PROCEDURE

- 14.1 Individuals who may wish to lodge a complaint shall do so in writing to the Director-General not more than thirty (30 days) from the date on which language assistance was denied or was not of a minimum standard.
- 14.2 Any complaint lodged must provide full names, address and contact information of the complainant.
- 14.3 Any complaint lodged must provide full and detailed description of the complaint.
- 14.4 The DG will acknowledge the complaint within 14 days of receiving it.
- 14.5 The DG will consider the complaint and conduct an investigation into the matter within 30 days from the date of acknowledgement of receipt.
- 14.6 The DG will respond in writing not later than 60 days after the complaint was lodged, informing the complainant of the decision.

15. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 15.1 The Director-General is the Information Officer of the DHET. The DG is the overseer of the implementation of this policy by staff within the DHET, colleges and all other public institutions directly accountable to the DHET.
- 15.2 Regional managers and Heads of DHET colleges must ensure the adoption and use of official languages in line with this policy and, report annually to the DG on the status of the use of official languages within their institutions.
- 15.3 The Head of the Language Unit will take the responsibility to implement the language policy and monitor its implementation.
- 15.4 The Director General of the Department will report annually to the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture and the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB)

16. ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

- 16.1 This policy will be translated into all official languages according to the grid in Table 1.
- 16.2 This policy will be published on the DHET website and on the websites of its institutions.
- 16.3 The Language Unit as well as the Communication Unit will take the responsibility to ensure that the policy is disseminated to all stakeholders of the Department.
- 16.4 This policy will be made available for reading or reference in all institutions of the DHET, in the IRC and DLPS.
- 16.5 The DHET will post in a conspicuous place in the reception area, a clear statement translated into the languages most commonly used among the local populace, of the availability of interpreter services. A statement to this effect will also be posted on the DHET website.


17. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 17.1 The Head of the language unit must ensure the implementation of this policy and continuous monitoring thereof.
- 17.2 Monitoring reports must be submitted to the Director-General of the department by the end of each financial year.
- 17.3 The implementation plan for this policy is attached as **Annexure A**.

18. REVIEW

- 18.1 This policy will be reviewed when necessary or at least once within a period of five years.

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING LANGUAGE POLICY**APPROVAL**

DEPARTMENT	DIRECTOR-GENERAL	SIGNATURE	DATE SIGNED
Higher Education and Training	G F QONDE		03/05/2021

EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/05/2021

LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (DHET)

1. Introduction

In terms of the Use of Official Languages Act no. 12 of 2012, every national department, national public entity and national public enterprise must adopt a language policy, which should be gazetted and they should establish language units.

The following is the plan for the implementation of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) language policy, in compliance with the Use of Official Languages Act, 2012.

Languages chosen for government business were selected in accordance with language prevalence in various provinces.

2. Purpose

The implementation plan provides details regarding the structure, processes and resources required to operationalize the language policy, and its financial implications for the DHET.

3. Fundamentals of implementation

The implementation of the language policy will be characterised by the following key principles:

- The implementation of the language policy will be done through a phased-in approach over a period of two years.
- Multilingual publications will be phased-in over a period of two years.
- The process of implementation will occur within a period of three years from the date of publication of this policy.
- Capacity will be built incrementally over a period of 3 years, between 2020 and 2023 for meaningful and effective implementation.

- The Director General shall provide the financial, human resources and any other resources required to support the implementation of this policy.
- An increased demand for translation and editing, in various official languages is to be expected and provided for. Interpreters and translators shall be appointed by the Department on a permanent and contract basis to deal with the expected increase in the demand for these services.
- Priority will be given to further skills training in translation and editing, interpreting, lexicography and terminography.

4. Phasing-in of the Language Policy

The establishment of the language unit for the DHET will be prioritized to ensure compliance and successful implementation of the language policy.

In the interim, the Director: Communication will take the responsibility of implementing the policy until the Department establishes the language unit.

5. Establishment of a language unit for the DHET

The DHET, like all national departments, is required in terms of the Act to establish a language unit which will be responsible for implementing the language policy and providing language services.

The language unit will be devoted to managing the implementation of the language policy. This language unit will play a central role in ensuring the sustained use of the official languages as required by the language policy. It will also support efforts to implement and promote multilingualism.

The basic requirements for the establishment of the language unit will include amongst others,

- provision of financial resources
- provision of human resources capacity requirements,
- physical and virtual space,
- equipment and tools, as well as
- training and capacity building.

5.1 The structure of the language unit

The language unit should be incorporated into the organizational structure of the department.

The language unit will be referred to as the Directorate: Language Practice Services. It is essential to place this unit on a Directorate level, as there will be increased demand for language services and to ensure a good standard and quality of this service. The population of this unit will however be done on a phasing in approach, building towards the desired level at which the unit will be.

At least three Sub-Directorates, specializing in particular areas of language services, will be required for a successful unit.

It is proposed that the language unit be placed under the Chief Directorate: Media Liaison and National Communication.

Below is the organizational structure for the DHET language unit:

Directorate: Language Practice Services 1 Director 1 Personal Assistant		
Sub-Directorate: Translation, Interpreting and Editing 1x Deputy Director 3x Assistant Directors	Sub-Directorate: policy implementation, promotion, research and monitoring 1x Deputy Director 1 x Assistant Director 3 Language Practitioners	Sub-Directorate: Quality Control 1 x Deputy Director 3 ASDs

10 Language practitioners (including South African Sign Language)		
---	--	--

5.2 Functions of the Language Unit

The functions of the DHET language unit will be as follows:

- Advise the Director-General on the development, adoption and implementation of the language policy for the department.
- Monitor and assess the use of official languages and compliance with the language policy by the department.
- Compile and submit reports to the Minister of Arts and Culture and to the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) on:
 - The activities of the DHET language unit,
 - Implementation of the DHET language policy in compliance with the Act, and
 - Any complaints received and how they were dealt with.
- Promote parity of esteem and equitable treatment of official languages in the Republic.
- Facilitate equitable access to services and information of the department.
- Provide and manage language support services in the form of professional translation, editing and interpretation and other language services for the department

Creating awareness on the language policy within the department.

6. Activity plan

Activities	Output Indicator	Time Frame	Responsibility

Approve the policy and its publication in the Government Gazette	Approved submission	28 February 2021	The Minister
Publish reviewed language policy in the government gazette	Reviewed Language policy published is in the Government Gazette	30 April 2021	Communication Unit
Provide funding for the establishment of language unit	Language unit funding has been allocated	1 April 2021	Director-General
Incorporate language unit on organogram	Language unit incorporated into the organogram	1 April 2021	Human Resources Management Unit
Establish language Unit	Language unit established	31 May 2021	Communication Unit
Advertise posts for language units	Language unit posts advertised	31 May 2021	Human Resources Management Unit
Appointment of personnel in Language unit (phase one)	Language unit personnel appointed	01 July 2021	Human Resources Management Unit
Appointment of personnel in Language unit (phase two)	Language unit personnel appointed	30 September 2021	Human Resources Management Unit
Request for office space and resources	Office space request submitted	01 June 2021	Communication Unit

Acquisition of office space and resources	Office space identified and provided	30 June 2021	Facilities Management
Translate the policy into different languages	Language policy translated into various languages	30 June 2021	Communication Unit
Distribution of language policy	Language policy distributed to all relevant stakeholders	31 May 2021	Communication Unit
Develop and implement awareness programmes	Awareness programmes are implemented	31 December 2021	Language Unit
Submit report to Department of Arts and Culture and PansSalb	Report submitted	31 March every year	Director-General