

NWU promotes inclusion and acceptance

Issued by [North-West University \(NWU\)](#)

23 Sep 2020

The North-West University (NWU) is constantly working towards building a culture of inclusion and acceptance. To this end, it has put in place policies and programmes that promote gender and language equality.

The university has a multilingual language policy that aims to develop Setswana, Sesotho, Afrikaans and English as official languages. It is also developing multilingual pedagogies in its classrooms that foster a climate in which more educational material would be available over time in all the official languages.

“We want to get to a point where practices in classrooms and in online sessions would facilitate the use of the metalinguistic abilities that our multilingual students bring to teaching and learning,” says Prof. Susan Coetzee-Van Rooy, research professor in the research entity Understanding and Processing Language in Complex Settings (UPSET).

At the NWU, staff and students are encouraged to self-identify their gender. The university fully supports and creates a safe space for the LGBTQIA+ community to express themselves openly and freely. It has the Gender Benefit Network, a fundraising network, for LGBTQIA+ staff and allies within and outside the university.

It also has the Steering Committee for Awareness of Gender that aims to promote awareness and support for gender-related initiatives at the university.

“It is important to have conversations about the realities of gender inequality and gender biases. To achieve this safe spaces need to be created so these conversations can be had,” says Adv. René Koraan, director professional development and community engagement in the Faculty of Law.

Gender and language awareness weeks

Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at the NWU, Prof. Robert Balfour, has a mandate to raise awareness, facilitate cross-curricular events that affirm the values espoused by the university and to host critical and courageous conversations about the important social issues of race, gender and language.

This year, despite the various challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the NWU will host its annual Gender Awareness Week (GAW) and Language Awareness Week (LAW) events from 28 September to 2 October.

During this week, the NWU will facilitate critical conversations on current issues related to gender-based violence (GBV) and expand its conversations on the use of South African languages in domains such as education and the media.

The overarching approach for GAW and LAW in 2020 is to ‘trouble our past’ and ‘re-imagine our future’ with respect to gender and language experiences in South Africa. Local and global experts have been invited to provide input into these conversations.

There will also be parallel platforms where examples of best practice related to gender and language will be showcased.

To view the programme, [click here](#)

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