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## UCT professor re-appointed as chairperson of PanSALB



Professor Lolie Makhubu-Badenhorst

Photo: supplied

Professor Lolie Makhubu-Badenhorst of the University of Cape Town (UCT) has been re-appointed as the Chairperson of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) for an unprecedented third term, reinforcing her commitment to promoting and protecting indigenous languages across South Africa.

Her reappointment comes at a pivotal time as the country grapples with implementing effective language policies in public and private institutions. With over 30 years of democracy, multilingualism's recognition and practical application remain crucial to fostering social cohesion, inclusivity and transformation.

Makhubu-Badenhorst, the director of the [Multilingualism Education Project \(MEP\)](#) in the Centre for [Higher Education Development \(CHED\)](#) at UCT, was re-appointed on 24 March 2025 to serve a two-year term, renewable for one additional year. She is part of a

15-member board appointed in February by Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie for a five-year period. Among her fellow board members is UCT [PhD candidate Naledi Maqonopo](#).

The PanSALB board reports directly to the minister and the Portfolio Committee on Sport, Arts and Culture, ensuring that South Africa's constitutional mandate of multilingualism is upheld. It plays a vital role in advising Parliament and overseeing the development and implementation of inclusive language policies.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to lead PanSALB at this critical time," Makhubu-Badenhorst said. "The minister and my colleagues have recognised the talent coming from this institution. For me, this means that UCT continues to produce some of the best minds in the country. UCT is already leading the continent in academic matters, and now we are at the forefront of shaping language policy at a national level."

### **A shared vision for multilingualism**

Makhubu-Badenhorst's re-appointment coincides with UCT's recent approval of a [revised Language Policy](#), which underscores the university's commitment to multilingualism, inclusivity and transformation in line with its [Vision 2030](#) strategy.

The newly approved policy embraces South Africa's linguistic diversity and positions language as a resource for learning, research and communication. It recognises English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans as UCT's official languages while committing to the development of Afrikaans (Kaaps), South African Sign Language (SASL), Khoekhoegowab and N|uu. The policy aims to promote marginalised indigenous languages in teaching, learning, research and communication, further reinforcing UCT's role as a leader in transformation and language inclusivity.

### **Protecting and advancing indigenous languages**

Among the key priorities of the PanSALB board is the protection and promotion of indigenous languages, including the Khoisan languages.

"In 2023, we confirmed an honorary degree upon the only living speaker of the N|uu language, Dr Ouma Katrina [Esau]," Makhubu-Badenhorst said. "When you look at the South African coat of arms, Khoisan languages are represented, yet none of them have official status. My vision is to change that and ensure that our language policies are not just symbolic but effectively implemented."

She further emphasised the urgency of preserving indigenous languages, cautioning that failure to act now could lead to their extinction, along with the rich cultural heritage they represent. "Language is the foundation of social cohesion and cultural identity," she said.

### **A call to action**

Makhubu-Badenhorst urged South Africans to engage with PanSALB's initiatives actively. "I urge all citizens to follow our work and contribute to discussions on language policy. Our mandate is transparent, and we operate independently, without fear or favour. PanSALB is not merely a regulatory body – we are the custodians of South Africa's linguistic diversity. Our work ensures that future generations can speak, write and live in their indigenous languages with pride."

With UCT leading the charge through its newly revised Language Policy and its commitment to promoting multilingualism, the university continues to stand as a beacon of

transformation, knowledge and inclusivity – not just in South Africa, but across the continent and beyond.

*Story by: Myolisi Gophe, UCT News*

***Ends***

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