



Constitution of the Network of Expertise in Language Assessment (NExLA)

Preamble

In recognition of the need to consolidate the gains in the field of language testing in South Africa over the previous decades, those who resolve to adopt this constitution do so in order to establish a formally organized association that will promote and protect the interests of professionals in the field.

Name

The name of the association shall be the Network of Expertise in Language Assessment (NExLA), hereafter referred to as ‘NExLA’, “the NExLA”, or “the association”.

Goals

The goals of NExLA shall be to

1. promote and develop the field of language testing in Southern Africa, but not to exclude from participation in its activities other regions, continents, or fields of academic endeavour;
2. protect the professional interests of those working within the field of language assessment, both through accepting and subscribing to internationally recognized standards, codes of ethics, or codes of practice, and by formulating and adopting its own codes of ethics or related codes, or by other appropriate means;

3. organize regular conferences, colloquia, seminars, lectures or meetings to provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and for mutual stimulus to researchers and teachers in the field of language assessment;
4. connect its membership to international scholarship in the field, thereby promoting a wider international recognition of and higher profile for South African work in language testing, that might include both the attendance and the hosting of international conferences, membership and affiliation of international bodies, guest editing of national or international journals and other kinds of publications, on themes of interest and importance to NExLA members;
5. disseminate and seek to publish the scholarly and professional work of its members in the appropriate manner, thus serving to give account of such work both to peers and to the public, in order to give greater accessibility to those working in the field as well as to those affected by language assessments;
6. make available its expertise to any current or future project which involves or is related to the experience or expertise of its members, through workshops, consultation and advice, contract research, product development or similar activities;
7. provide, as far as its resources allow, encouragement especially to newcomers to the field by assisting them financially, through stipends, postgraduate bursaries, and similar means;
8. collaborate with other organisations and entities focussing on language assessment.

Membership

Membership of NExLA shall include all qualifying individuals or institutions in terms of the criteria below who have a known or demonstrable interest in language assessment and who voluntarily wish to associate with the goals of NExLA.

There shall be the following categories of membership:

- (1) **Ordinary Membership** is open to persons who are in possession of at least a first degree or tertiary diploma. Membership may, however, be conferred on someone who does not satisfy this requirement, at the discretion of the NExLA's Executive.
- (2) **Student Membership** is open to *bona fide* students, at a reduced membership fee.
- (3) **Associate Membership** may be conferred on other people who do not satisfy any of the above conditions for membership, at the discretion of the Executive.

- (4) **Honorary Membership** may be conferred by the Executive on persons who have made outstanding contributions to the field.
- (5) **Institutional Membership** may be extended by the Executive to institutions. Institutional Membership fees shall be higher than that of ordinary membership. All correspondence to such members should be directed to a specific person representing the institutional membership.

All individuals or institutions who qualify for membership shall have voting rights at meetings of NExLA, provided they are personally present, or institutionally represented.

Membership in all categories shall be valid only if the subscription and dues of such members are paid up, and should membership subscription be in abeyance, such members shall forfeit their vote in meetings.

Meetings and conferences

- (1) NExLA will hold meetings as determined by the Executive, but at least one general meeting shall be held every two years.
- (2) The general meeting will receive reports from the Executive on NExLA's activities and performance.
- (3) Accounts of the funds of NExLA shall be put before the general meeting for the approval of the members present.
- (4) At general or special meetings of NExLA the quorum shall consist of ten members, or at least one half (50%) of the then duly subscribed membership.
- (5) Special meetings, giving a month's notice of the time, venue and purpose of the meeting, may be called at any time at the request of at least one third of the then current membership, or, if that is not possible, by at least ten members of NExLA.
- (6) In the event of a special or general meeting of NExLA that has been properly called, with due prior notification of members, not having a quorum, the meeting shall continue and any decisions made shall be ratified by all members of NExLA via an e-mail ballot.
- (7) NExLA-associated conferences or meetings shall be rotated, where possible, among different geographical regions. Any member or group of members may propose to the Executive to host such a conference or meeting, but on the clear understanding that the NExLA, though it may support the initiative, will not be liable for any of the costs of running the conference. The hosting conference committee or institution will be entitled to charge an attendance fee to cover the costs of the conference.
- (8) The Executive of NExLA might consider approaching an appropriate scholarly association with a view to functioning as a Special Interest Group (SIG) of such an association, all without compromising its own focus or autonomy.

Executive and management

- (1) Control of the NExLA shall be vested in an Executive which consists of members of NExLA in the following capacities: Chairperson, Deputy chairperson, up to five additional elected members to which certain functions may be assigned to ensure the smooth running of the association, and up to three further co-opted members of the NExLA, all with due regard to a fair geographical and other kinds of representation.
- (2) The Executive shall be elected at a general meeting of the NExLA, and members shall hold office for two years.
- (3) Retiring members shall be eligible for re-election, with due regard for continuity in running the affairs of the association.
- (4) The Chairperson is eligible for two successive terms of office, but can again become available for election after another term has elapsed.
- (5) The quorum for a properly constituted Executive meeting shall be one half (50%) of the total number of Executive members.
- (6) The Executive shall have the power to delegate its work to an Executive Committee appointed from among its members.
- (7) Unless the Annual General Meeting decides to elect the members of the Executive individually, the Executive shall appoint from among its ranks such members to fulfil specific responsibilities as are necessary to execute its various responsibilities, or from members co-opted for a specific duty or purpose.
- (8) The responsibilities of the Executive shall be to:
 - (a) see that the goals of NExLA are achieved;
 - (b) open such bank accounts as shall be considered necessary, to keep proper books of account, and to present independently prepared accounts, that are audited when required;
 - (c) determine the fees payable by the different categories of members;
 - (d) keep a record of membership, and ensure that subscriptions are paid;
 - (e) supervise the publishing activities of the NExLA and for that purpose to appoint editorial or other staff;
 - (f) arrange and assume responsibility for meetings and/or gatherings of any nature of the association;
 - (g) liaise and co-operate with other academic and professional bodies with language interests, and to seek affiliation with international bodies in the field of language assessment, or to facilitate the process for members wishing to join such international bodies, in particular the International Language Testing Association (ILTA);
 - (h) liaise with the media to make language assessment issues more accessible to the public;
 - (i) appoint any sub-committees which may be necessary for carrying out the work of the NExLA;
 - (j) formulate any necessary regulations which will take immediate effect, within the framework of this constitution. Such regulations shall be

submitted to a general or special meeting of the NExLA, called specifically for this purpose, for ratification and/or modification.

Subscriptions and fees

The Executive shall determine the fees to be paid by the different categories of members. Due payment of fees shall automatically entitle a member to participate in all NExLA activities. The Executive may suspend the membership of any member for due cause, for example in the case of overdue fees, and members whose subscription fees are not paid up, shall not be entitled to participation or voting in meetings.

Funds

- (1) In order to achieve its goals, NExLA shall establish a fund to meet the expenses associated with the activities that are undertaken to meet these goals.
- (2) NExLA is not permitted to distribute any of the profits or gains to any person and is required to utilize its funds solely for investment with the object or objects for which it has been established, and in line with other stipulations in this constitution.
- (3) Funds may be raised for conferences from external sources.

Change of constitution

This constitution may be changed by a majority of at least two thirds of the members present at a general meeting of the association or a special meeting summoned for this purpose. Full notice of proposed amendments shall be provided by the member of the Executive whose responsibility this is to all members at least one month before the meeting where the proposed amendments will be dealt with.

Dissolution

- (1) NExLA may be dissolved by a two-thirds majority of the members present at a meeting of the association especially called to consider dissolution.
- (2) On winding up or liquidation of NExLA, its nett assets will be given or transferred to another organisation with objects similar to those of the association.

[Adopted at the meeting establishing the Network of Expertise in Language Assessment (NExLA), held at the Groenkloof Campus of the University of Pretoria, on 1 July 2019.]