

Attending a top South African university can set graduates up for the future

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Graduates who received their degrees at the University of Pretoria's (UP) recent autumn graduation ceremonies are among the 12% of students in South Africa who have gained access to higher education over the past decade.



UP is one of the country's largest producers of graduates; its alumni represent 13.7% of the highly skilled workforce in Gauteng and 7.7% of the highly skilled workforce in South Africa. The University produces all of the country's veterinarians, almost one third of all engineers, and just under 15% of all doctors in South Africa. These figures show that attending a highly ranked university is one of the best ways to place a graduate on a robust career path.

More than 12,000 qualifications were awarded at the autumn graduation ceremonies held on Hillcrest campus in April and May. Of these qualifications, 207 were doctorates, 1,399 were master's degrees, 2,293 were honours degrees and 1,169, certificates. The doctoral and master's graduates that UP produces play an important role in contributing to knowledge generation and the creation of a new cohort of academics, researchers and highly qualified professionals in South Africa.

Notably, the Faculty of Veterinary Science heralded a new chapter in the education of veterinary nurses in South Africa by conferring veterinary nursing degrees (BVetNurs) on the country's first group of graduates. UP is continuing to look at innovative ways to increase student numbers, not only through in-person classes but also through online-only and lifelong-learning programmes, which will benefit its own graduates as well as graduates of other institutions who are employed in different industries.

In addition, providing educational opportunities to students from diverse backgrounds and undoing the regressive effects of socioeconomic backgrounds on educational achievement are national imperatives that UP has, and will, continue to address. Access by previously excluded groups has progressively improved year-on-year, with the percentage of black undergraduate contact students increasing from 45.2% in 2012 to 61.5% in 2021. The proportion of black postgraduate students increased from 53.1% to 65.6% in the same period. Enrolments in science, engineering and technology study fields for black students increased from 48.1% to 59%, also in the same period.

The University's continued efforts to actively promote the success of its students have borne fruit. This year, UP's final-year accounting students achieved a 99.4% pass rate in the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) Initial Test of Competence (ITC). SAICA administers two professional exams; the ITC is the first of the two. Last year, the University's final-year students made history by achieving an unprecedented 100% pass rate. UP has had consistent pass rates, having attained an average first-time pass rate of 94.6% over the past 15 years.

Students are proactively prepared not only for academic life, but also for the world of work. The initiative FLY@UP (which stands for the Finish Line is Yours) helps students complete their qualifications within the required time by providing academic support at different stages. The aim is for students to finish their degrees on time so that they can go out into society and contribute to the economy while at the same time freeing up opportunities for others to continue with their studies.

Through its Ready for Work programme, UP assists students with the transition from university to the workplace, by preparing them for job interviews and teaching them to navigate work life, among others. In 2012, the South African Graduate Employers Association awarded the programme with the Best Work Readiness Initiative Award. UP also equips graduates with the skills to start their own business. A free online entrepreneurship course is available to students, while TuksNovation, UP's business incubator, provides world-class technology development and entrepreneurial support to start-ups.

This year, UP embarked on the last part of its five-year strategic plan in the lead-up to the final leg of its current strategy, UP 2025. The University's strategic goals include realising student access and success, conducting high-quality research for greater societal impact, gaining global recognition, and achieving increased diversity, equity and inclusion as well as institutional sustainability.

The University's forward-thinking approach manifested most recently in the launch of its Centre for the Future of Work, which will assist companies to future-proof their workforce by determining what they need in order for employees to reskill and upskill for the future of work.

UP graduates, researchers and academics will continue to shape policy reform, create conditions for peace and prosperity, and allow members of its academic community to thrive and reach their full potential.

For more information, visit www.up.ac.za and read more [here](#).

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University of Pretoria



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