

UNISA | FAST FACTS



Define tomorrow.

UNISA





THIS IS UNISA

As *the* African university shaping futures in the service of humanity, Unisa has for more than 150 years set the tone on the continent and globally as one of the premier exponents of the tried-and-tested comprehensive open, distance and eLearning (CODEL) model.

This publication offers an informative snapshot of the key facts that define this great institution, capturing the essence of the university that defines tomorrow.

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FOREWORD BY THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

Dear Stakeholder

As much as we take pride in our illustrious history spanning more than 152 years, and our status as one of the leading lights in the higher education sphere in South Africa, on the continent, and globally, Unisa remains passionately focused on continuing to set trends and innovate in its core areas of teaching and learning, research and innovation, and engaged scholarship.

Unisa is all about reimagining: reimagining the higher education landscape, reimagining – and reclaiming – Africa’s intellectual futures, and, ultimately, reimagining a better world for all.

Moving with the times, we proactively introduced ten catalytic niche areas at the start of this decade that have already started catalysing research, innovation, and academic endeavour towards addressing very real societal challenges in new and exciting ways.

In tandem with this, we embarked on a highly focused science diplomacy drive, which has seen Unisa connecting South Africa’s best with the best in the world, and forging mutually beneficial key partnerships and agreements.

These are just two elements woven into the rich tapestry that is Unisa. In the pages that follow, we take great pleasure in sharing with you a bird’s-eye view of the African university defining tomorrow. In addition to student and alumni information, research (including our catalytic niche areas), innovation, teaching and learning, engaged scholarship, and the university’s footprint, this brochure presents key statistics and concise information on strategic partnerships.

We trust that you will find it an interesting and informative read!

Best wishes

Professor Puleng LenkaBula
Unisa Principal and Vice-Chancellor

A FIVEFOLD FOUNDATION

In the modern era, Unisa’s strength lies in five, non-negotiable pillars that underpin the institution as a whole.

These are:



Advancing technology towards mediated, quality learning and teaching



Propelling research and innovation



Pivoting engaged scholarship and global impact



Strengthening student support services



Resourcing the university’s future

PARTNERS

Unisa proudly partners with, among others, the following entities:



AFRICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION DU BARREAU AFRICAINE
رابطة المحامين الأفارقة
www.abarbar.org “The barless voice of the Legal Profession”



INTERNATIONALISATION

Unisa has, for a long, time realised the value of internationalising its functions, thereby expanding its continental and global footprint. Therefore, internationalisation is an important strategic function and an investment for the future, and one of the university's priorities.

The institution is committed to developing meaningful partnerships with like-minded high-ranking universities and knowledge organisations across the globe to accelerate teaching, research, innovation and engaged scholarship. Some of these include:

- Botswana Open University (Botswana)
- Fern Universität (Germany)
- Hawassa University (Ethiopia)
- Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (China)
- Kenyatta University (Kenya)
- Makerere University (Uganda)
- Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Russia)
- Russian University of Human Sciences (Russia)
- Tyumen State University (Russia)
- University of Bristol (United Kingdom)
- University of Cienfuegos (Cuba)
- University of Namibia (Namibia)
- Yonsei University (South Korea)

RANKED GLOBALLY

Accolades from authoritative international bodies have firmly established Unisa as a competitive force on the global academic stage. Recent rankings include the following:

QS World University Rankings placed Unisa among the

TOP 8

universities in South Africa (2024).



Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings recognised Unisa in the

TOP 6

for its global contributions to research and education (2024).



Webometrics ranked Unisa

7th

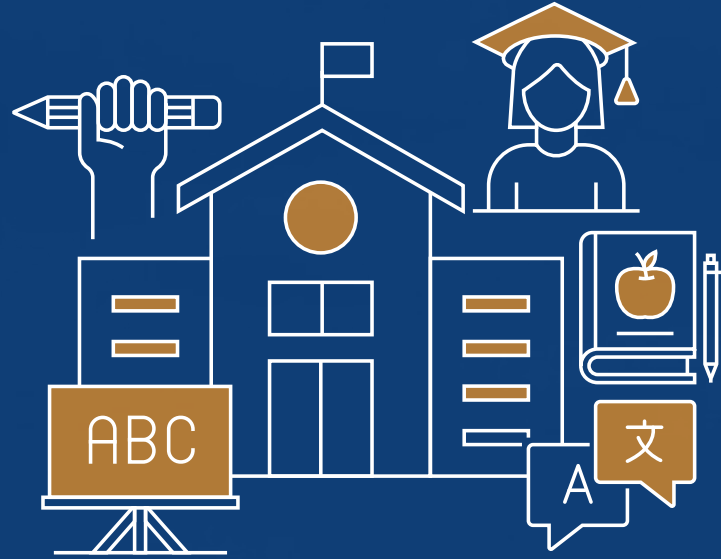
in sub-Saharan Africa (2024).

In its first ranking for 2025, Webometrics placed Unisa among the top 740 universities internationally, while the institution retained a solid **7th** position among

the 124 South African institutions of higher learning (also including colleges and academies, both private and public) ranked by the body.



THE NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



150+

years of excellence as the original distance education institution and a world leader in comprehensive open, distance and eLearning

54 000+

students who obtain certificates, diplomas, degrees and postgraduate qualifications annually



370 000+

students registered for diplomas, certificates, and graduate and postgraduate qualifications

1 000 000+

alumni who are contributing to various sectors of our economy

110

countries other than South Africa in which our students reside



9

colleges, including a business school, offering qualifications in a range of disciplines



10

catalytic niche areas that will activate and enhance Unisa's academic agenda

235

researchers with coveted National Research Foundation ratings



5

broad research areas



8

research institutes and bureaux

8

endowed research chairs



NATIONAL TREASURE WITH A GLOBAL REACH

The University of South Africa (Unisa), the only higher education institution to carry the name of the country, is the people's university in every sense of the word. Throughout its history, spanning more than 15 decades, Unisa has responded to the developments brought about by changing times, the needs of a developing country and society at large, and an ever-evolving higher education environment. This was achieved through ongoing and dynamic transitioning. Unisa's journey has been one of continuous growth and transformation, aimed at shaping tomorrow through education.

Unisa's roots (and indeed those of higher education in South Africa) date back to 1873 when the University of the Cape of Good Hope was founded, initially functioning as an examining body for higher education.

In 1916, the university changed its name to the University of South Africa and in 1918, it relocated to Pretoria. In 1946, it became one of the first public universities in the world to teach exclusively by means of distance education. Today, Unisa is widely recognised as a leading comprehensive open, distance and eLearning university (CODeL). The university has more than 370 000 students and is the largest university in South Africa, and on the African continent, and one of the world's mega-universities.

With offices across South Africa and students from 111 countries, Unisa has an extensive geographical footprint and global reach.

PROUDLY AFRICAN

Located at the southern tip of Africa, Unisa takes pride in its identity and has the interests of the continent at heart. Through its teaching and learning, relevant research and innovation, and engaged scholarship initiatives, the university acknowledges its African roots and acts on the needs of South Africa and the continent.

Curricular change in the interests of asserting Africa-centred knowledge systems and research reforms is but one of the initiatives aimed at advancing transformation and the decolonisation of scholarship.

Unisa supports Africa's socio-economic transformation and development goals in various ways. The university has collaboration agreements with the African Union Commission and the Africa Forum, an association of former heads of state and leaders on the African continent, among others. It also collaborates with various government departments to advance national development goals.

Furthermore, Unisa houses several Africa-focused chairs, centres and programmes, all of which have the advancement and interest of the continent at heart.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

Unisa's scenic main campus is located in Tshwane. It is supplemented by a student campus (also in the city), a Science Campus in Johannesburg, six regional hubs, 20 service centres countrywide, and a service centre in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.

However, as a comprehensive open, distance and eLearning (CODeL) institution, Unisa's presence is not restricted to buildings and campuses. Unisa is literally at the fingertips of everyone with a suitable device and internet access, anywhere in the world.

Regional hubs

- Eastern Cape (located in East London)
- Gauteng (located in Tshwane)
- KwaZulu-Natal (located in Durban)
- Midlands (located in Rustenburg, and serving students in the North West, Free State and Northern Cape)
- North Eastern (located in Polokwane, and serving students in Limpopo and Mpumalanga)
- Western Cape (located in Parow)



INNOVATIVE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

As a comprehensive university, Unisa offers both vocational and academic programmes from undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas to degrees, including postgraduate diplomas, master's and doctoral qualifications. Unisa also offers short learning programmes targeting specific needs of industry and civil society. As an open distance learning pioneer, Unisa is known for delivering well-designed, interactive study material.

A wide-ranging menu of support services caters for the needs of its diverse student population and includes tutorials, peer-group support, video conferences and satellite broadcasts to a virtual learning environment. Unisa's "classroom", known as myUnisa, allows students to engage with their lecturers and e-tutors and to participate in discussion forums and wikis, among others. Students can enrol for learning programmes in a wide spectrum of disciplines.

Unisa has eight colleges and a business school, comprising of the following:



College of Accounting Sciences

The College of Accounting Sciences (CAS) strives for excellence in accounting education. It is well-positioned in the higher education sector and offers high-quality qualifications, accredited by the Council on Higher Education, including several qualifications endorsed by professional bodies, both nationally and internationally.

Currently CAS enrolls, on average, 40% of all accounting students in South Africa and produces 20% of accounting graduates.

Schools

- School of Accountancy
- School of Applied Accountancy



College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences

The College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES) offers a wide range of programmes from the 'green sciences' that promote sustainable environmental management to animal health, agricultural management, horticulture, geography, life sciences and consumer sciences, which focus on food, nutrition and hospitality. On offer are BSc degrees in Agricultural Science (three streams), Postgraduate Diplomas in Agriculture (four streams) and Bachelor of Consumer Science degrees (six streams). Together with the College of Science, Engineering and Technology

(see below), CAES is housed at Unisa's Science Campus in Florida, Johannesburg, offering 25 individual laboratories, two level-three biosafety laboratories and a comprehensive horticulture centre.

Schools

- School of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- School of Environmental Sciences



College of Economic and Management Sciences

The College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS) is the largest provider of business education in Africa and one of the largest in the world. Currently some 70 000 students enrol for the college's formal qualifications. One out of every four BCom degrees awarded by South African universities goes to a Unisa graduate.

The college constantly conducts intensive research in the private and public sectors to establish the relevance and usefulness of its degrees and courses.

Schools

- School of Economic and Financial Sciences
- School of Management Sciences
- School of Public and Operations Management



College of Education

The largest of Unisa's colleges with close on 95 000 students, the College of Education (CEDU) is responsible for the professional education and training of more than 50% of all teachers in South Africa.

Schools

- School of Educational Management
- School of Teacher Education



College of Human Sciences

The College of Human Sciences (CHS) offers high-quality general academic and career-focused programmes in the arts and humanities, social sciences, education, religion and theology.

Schools

- School of Arts
- School of Humanities
- School of Social Sciences



College of Law

The College of Law (CLAW) confers professional qualifications that provide access to the legal profession, as well as various career-based qualifications in subjects such as police practice. The college has well-qualified and experienced academics in a variety of disciplines, and with more than 82 000 students, it is the largest Faculty of Law in Africa.

Schools

- School of Law
- School of Criminal Justice



College of Science, Engineering and Technology

Offering learning programmes in a range of science, engineering and technology disciplines, the College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET) opens the door to a variety of exciting careers in industry, education, and basic or applied research. Together with the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (see above), CSET is housed at Unisa's Science Campus in Florida, Johannesburg, offering state-of-the-art

laboratories and high-end equipment, thereby advancing science education and research at a national level.

Schools

- School of Computing
- School of Engineering
- School of Science



College of Graduate Studies

The College of Graduate Studies (CGS) forms part of Unisa's Research and Innovation Portfolio and differs from the other colleges in that it does not offer graduate programmes. Instead, it provides a range of research training programmes, enrichment activities and support mechanisms to assist postgraduate students and contribute to the development of researchers. The college provides a virtual research platform for postgraduate students in all colleges, thus promoting both interdisciplinary and research excellence.

As Unisa's answer to the national imperative to increase the number of doctoral graduates and provide for high-calibre researchers, CGS is also responsible for the administrative, registration and examination processes, and the facilitation of the research training of some 12 000 master's and doctoral candidates that represent a large slice of the research potential in South African universities.

School

- School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies



Graduate School of Business Leadership

Regarded as one of the top business schools in South Africa, the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL) has produced more than a third of all the MBL/MBA degrees awarded by South African universities since its inception, with many alumni holding senior positions in world-class companies.

Its flagship programmes are the Master of Business Leadership and the Doctor of Business Leadership.

THE FUTURE, TODAY

Unisa has identified ten catalytic niche areas that will not only activate and enhance the institution's academic agenda but also intensify academics' experiences as engaged scholars who refuse to be academic pies in the sky; scholars who will care to address the needs of our society.

Unisa's ten catalytic niche areas



Marine Studies

According to the Marine Research Plan of the Department of Science and Technology (2014), coastal oceanography is still in its infancy. There exists a plethora of commercial activities and trade along the 2 800 km coastline of South Africa. The Port of Durban is the biggest and busiest port in South Africa. Unisa needs to tap deep into the opportunities for supporting economic growth through teaching and learning, research and innovation as well as engaged scholarship, while at the same time creating awareness of how to protect our marine world from degradation.



Aviation and Aeronautical Studies

South Africa has 18 airports, with OR Tambo, Cape Town and King Shaka being international airports. These airports cater for people and goods coming into South Africa or transiting to and from other countries. This information confirms that this is a niche area that would support a major component of the country's economy. Participation in aviation and aeronautical studies would range from, among others, aviation mechanics and engineering, electronics, operations and safety policy in accordance with international standards and conventions, as well as traveller experience.



Automotive Studies

The South African Automotive Master Plan (SAAM) 2021 – 2035 envisages the automotive industry to grow from 600 000 to 1.4 million vehicles a year in production at its peak. This is a confirmation that there is a potential to be explored in Unisa's commitment to producing quality students in this specific niche.



Energy Studies

The energy mix spectrum in South Africa comprises generation, distribution and service (including sales), all requiring different, specific knowledge and skills. Developments concerning power shortages are proof that there is an urgent need to review how we provide energy to the growing and transforming population. South Africa is blessed with natural light to generate solar energy, as well as wind energy which has seen the establishment of wind energy farms in the Northern Cape. Developments such as these are an opportunity for Unisa to participate in building an energy-secure country and a continent that is lit using sustainable energy.



Space Studies and the Square Kilometre Array

Unisa has been involved in the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project since 2012. SKA is a \$1billion international project to create an array of antennas for detecting radio waves that will have a receiving area of one square kilometre. The work being done in this regard is of a pioneering nature, involving multi-disciplinary experts and scientists working collaboratively from across the globe. Building sophisticated and far-reaching telescopes would be a product of extreme engineering, the building of large capacity information and communications technology hardware and software, and related functions and capabilities. The fact that the magnitude and scope of this kind of project require skills from across the world, speaks to the internationalisation agenda that the university is embarking upon.



Fourth Industrial Revolution and Digitalisation

The impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is upon us and has drastically changed production methods and trade methodologies. Disruptive technologies such as 3D printing, the use of cryptocurrencies, machine learning, the use of big data and algorithms to create data analytics, robotics, etc. are defining the new normal of conducting daily business and studies. Such developments speak to the need for building capacity in the legal, commercial, and technology fields at the university. It is clear that embracing the effects of 4IR cannot be left to catch-up processes at the tail end; but should be part and parcel of training and development by institutions of higher learning, such as Unisa.



Biotechnological Studies

The urgent need for the development of vaccines during and post-COVID-19 can only be met through improving and rapidly developing research capacity and technology. With these studies, our lives and the health of our planet, including sustainable food production methods that are friendlier to the environment, could improve significantly.



Health/Pharmaceutical Studies

COVID-19 has, in many ways, tested our capacity to respond to health challenges, including any other pandemic that may erupt. Research in molecular biology, healthcare, the development of health equipment, and the development of specialised skills in pulmonary medicine are urgently needed. In fact, the country must develop the capacity to continue training medical specialists in different areas that may be deemed critical and urgent at the emergence of any other future pandemics and life-threatening diseases.



Feminist/Womanist/Bosadi Theorisations

It is often stated that the most disrespected person in society is the black woman. The most unprotected person is a black woman. This is why mainstream/Western feminism is not enough; there is a need for intersectionality – feminism that protects all, regardless of race, gender identity, or capabilities. Bosadi is a theory for the context of black South African women encompassing racial oppression, sexist African culture, classism as well as general sexism. It is crucial for the university to focus on this field of research and studies.



Student Support and Co-curricular Activities

Being an African university that caters for numerous student populations drawn from different walks of life, including (and especially) those coming from poor backgrounds, proper support and tutelage to such students is important to Unisa. Equipping students with life skills beyond academics is crucial. The ongoing globalisation and interconnection of the world order dictate that the education and skills imparted to students are such that they allow them to be citizens of the world who can compete favourably in the global village as they explore different ways of doing things and yet remain proudly African/South African.

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

Unisa has a vibrant and dynamic research culture, and its strong transformative agenda encourages a creative approach to new ways of knowing. Here academics and postgraduate students are committed to finding research and innovative solutions that will address important national and global questions, and contribute to the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of South Africa and the African continent.

At Unisa, every effort is made to create and nurture an environment where researchers can live their passion, whether they prefer to explore new worlds or apply new ideas to real-world problems. To this end, it supports basic, strategic and applied research as well as innovation and commercialisation projects, invests in postgraduate studies, and explores brave new frontiers in a number of key disciplines.

The university has a pool of talented researchers of whom 235 have received National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings. Annually, the university's researchers contribute more than 1 323 articles to accredited journals. Unisa also boasts close to 10 700 master's and doctoral students.

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) counts 26 Unisa researchers among its membership, while one researcher is a member of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS).

Three Unisa scientists are in the top five most cited scientists in South Africa.

At the Unisa Science Campus, the focus is on growing research capacity and supporting research activities in the fields of science, engineering and technology, as well as agriculture and environmental sciences. With leading-edge laboratories (facilities not generally associated with open, distance and eLearning institutions), the Science Campus is the place where scientists get to do what they love to do – putting theory into practice.

At the heart of the university and offering exceptional support to researchers, the Unisa Library is the largest academic library on our continent, and one of the best-endowed in terms of information resources and information technology. It is, moreover, one of the largest dedicated distance and open education libraries in the world. The Unisa Library boasts 2 454 386 items in its print collection, and 496 047 e-publications.

The institution's College of Graduate Studies provides a virtual research platform for postgraduate students in all colleges, thus promoting both interdisciplinary and research excellence.

The university also houses the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library (TMPL). Containing an exhaustive repository of the documents, papers and artefacts of former President Thabo Mbeki and other African leaders, TMPL is a living library and important African centre of learning, research and discourse for the transformation of Africa.

Research niche areas

- Unisa has five broad research niche areas:
1. Knowledge production and human capital development in response to the needs of South Africa and the African continent
 2. The promotion of democracy, human rights and responsible citizenship
 3. Innovation and capacity building in science and technology
 4. Economic and environmental sustainability
 5. Open distance learning

Research institutes and bureaux

To provide impetus to research in these focus areas, Unisa has a number of dedicated institutes and bureaux, including the following:

- *The Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Social Policy Research*, which conducts applied research into the discourses of the family and family life, and the impact of poverty in South Africa and beyond.
- *The Bureau of Market Research*, which comprises of four divisions: income and expenditure research, behavioural and communication research, economic research, and demographic research, and also undertakes socioeconomic research in South Africa.
- *The Institute for Corporate Citizenship*, which builds individual and institutional capacity for sustainable business and social unity.
- *The Institute for Gender Studies*, an interdisciplinary research hub that is committed to raising awareness of gender issues in the Southern African context.
- *The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)*, an independent foreign policy think tank that advances balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of the global politics and diplomacy of South Africa and Africa.
- *The Institute for Nanotechnology and Water Sustainability (iNanoWS)*, which addresses current and emerging issues relating to water quality and water scarcity.
- *The Institute for Open Distance Learning (IODL)*, which is mandated to position Unisa as a leading ODL institution through advancing ODL and eLearning scholarship on the African continent and the world.
- *The Institute for Science and Technology Education*, which focuses on the development, provision and advancement of mathematics, science and technology education.

- *The Institute for the Development of Energy for African Sustainability (IDEAS)*, which specialises in novel techniques for designing chemical processes with an emphasis on reducing material and energy consumption as well as carbon dioxide emissions.
- *The Research Institute for Theology and Religion*, which develops and manages theological and religious research and its interface with society.

Research chairs

Unisa hosts seven endowed research chairs, and one Unisa-funded research chair.

Endowed research chairs

- DST/NRF SARCHI Chair in Information and Communication Technology for Development
- DST/NRF SARCHI Research Chair in Social Policy
- Exxaro Chair in Climate and Sustainability Transitions
- UNESCO Co-Chair in Early Childhood Education, Care and Development
- UNESCO-Unisa Africa Chair in Nanosciences and Nanotechnology
- UNITWIN/UNESCO Chair in Open Distance Learning

Unisa-funded research chair

- Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair

STUDENTS, OUR LIFEblood

370 000+

students annually choose Unisa to further their studies. As an open distance and eLearning university, Unisa offers its students flexibility and they choose when, where and how they study. Courtesy of evolving technology and with access to internet facilities, the campus is just a click away for most Unisa students who can register, download study material and submit assignments online. myUnisa, the university's online campus, provides students with electronic access to administrative and academic services, and the opportunity to engage with their lecturers and peers.



54 000+

students obtain certificates, diplomas, degrees and postgraduate qualifications annually. Thus, every year Unisa delivers more than **54 000** skilled and competent graduates to bolster the country's labour market. The majority of Unisa students are undergraduates, but more than **40 000** are enrolled for postgraduate qualifications. Of these, more than **10 000** are master's and doctoral students.



70%+

The number of female students has shown a year-on-year growth and currently females account for **70.7%** of the student population.

110

Unisa students reside in **110** countries other than South Africa, with the majority being based in other SADC and African countries.



62%

Being an open distance and e-learning university affording people the opportunity to study while pursuing their careers, Unisa has a higher percentage of mature students than residential universities, with **62%** of students being between **25-39** years of age.





ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Unisa is an engaged university. We work in collaboration with government, business, civil society and communities of shared locus or shared purpose, for the enrichment and social relevance of scholarship while actively working to enhance sustainable development outcomes.

The mission of a socially responsive higher education sector is critical and requires decisive action. At Unisa, engaged scholarship is at the cutting edge of our contribution to nation building. As an engaged university, Unisa is using the intellectual resources at its disposal to undertake a journey with communities from vulnerability to empowerment.

Engaged scholarship is a scholarly endeavour that enhances teaching, learning and research, while concurrently pursuing the socio-economic development imperatives of South Africa and the African continent. Projects are designed to respond to the development needs highlighted in the National Development Plan, the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The projects are extensive in influence, impact and range, with 115 transformative projects operating across the country and abroad.

Some notable projects are:

- Maths, English and accounting tutorials
- Health and lifeskills training
- Nature conservation
- Business education and skills
- Financial literacy
- Tourism capacity building
- Leadership development
- Integrated water management
- Breaking the cycle of poverty
- Africanising mathematics teaching
- Research support and development
- Computer and information literacy
- Sustainable nanotechnology solutions for rural communities

“ At Unisa, we refuse to accept the world as it is, but dare to imagine a different, more just and sustainable world. ”

ACCELERATING DEVELOPMENT

Unisa's strategic initiatives at national, continental, international and inter-institutional level enable the university to contribute to the education landscape and accelerate development on an African and global level. Amongst these initiatives are the following:

Thabo Mbeki African School of Public & International Affairs (TM-School)

This school was established by Unisa in partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation. Offering short learning programmes and qualifications up to doctoral level, the TM-School focuses on the development challenges of society, searches for new knowledge and ideas, and provides usable knowledge. The school's areas of study include citizenship and development, public leadership studies, peace and development studies, the study of government affairs, urban and regional affairs, security and intelligence studies, and sustainable livelihood and resource management.

Advancing science diplomacy

This is an integral part of the university's new vision, which is anchored in, amongst others, the need to advance and enhance internationalisation and strategic partnerships, especially in research, innovation and engaged scholarship, and science diplomacy, based on the catalytic niche areas that foreground the vision of Unisa under the leadership of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula. To date, the initiative delivered high-level visits to universities and related entities in Africa, Europe and Asia, and the signing of cooperation agreements with key academic players.

Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI)

Unisa, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), established the YALI Regional Leadership Centre South Africa (RLC-SA), offering leadership development programmes for young Africans with promising leadership qualities. The YALI RLC-SA is based at the Unisa Graduate School of Business Leadership. Since its inception in 2015, the YALI RLC-SA has transformed the lives of more than 6 500 young African leaders directly, while alumni initiatives have influenced thousands more.

Agreement between the African Union Commission (AUC) and Unisa

The ongoing global development alliance cooperative agreement between the AUC and Unisa reaffirms the stature and leadership excellence of Unisa and the significant role that the institution plays in the economic, social and political reshaping of the African continent.

United Nations Global Compact

Unisa was the first South African university to become a signatory to the compact and has integrated its principles of human rights, labour, anti-corruption and environment into its curriculum and research focus areas.

African Council for Distance Education (ACDE)

Unisa is a prominent member of this organisation which comprises African universities and other institutions of higher learning and pursues the objective of promoting research and innovation and ensuring quality open distance education in Africa.

International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)

Unisa works closely with the ICDE, a membership-led global organisation in the field of online, open, flexible and technology enhanced education. In 2015, Unisa and the council partnered in hosting the 26th ICDE World Conference. Professor Mpine Makoe, Executive Dean of Unisa's College of Education, was elected to the board of the ICDE in 2023.

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)

Unisa is a prominent and active member of CODESRIA, a Pan-African research organisation headquartered in Dakar, Senegal. Professor Puleng LenkaBula, Unisa's Principal and Vice-Chancellor, addressed the organisation's 16th General Assembly in 2023 on behalf of all African vice-chancellors, university presidents and rectors.

Times Higher Education (THE)

Regarded as the gold standard among rankings of its kind, the core mandate of THE is to rank universities according to how they perform on a global scale, and to provide resources for readers to understand the different missions and successes of higher education institutions. Unisa has partnered with THE on a number of initiatives, and in 2023 the university hosted THE's University Impact Forum, attended by Africa's most prominent higher education leaders, who met to examine the opportunities and challenges higher education faces in Africa over the coming decades.

ALUMNI, OUR AMBASSADORS

Every Unisa graduate is remarkable. To be successful in an open, distance and eLearning institution requires self-discipline and commitment, and the university takes pride in the hundreds of thousands of alumni who have joined its list of remarkable graduates over the course of its 150 years of existence.

Unisa is extremely honoured to count among its alumni, three South African Presidents serving since the advent of democracy in the country. The university is the alma mater of the late Nelson Mandela, his successor Thabo Mbeki (who is also currently Unisa Chancellor), and the current President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa.

International leaders, including Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president, also passed through the university's academic portals.

Unisa salutes the defenders of our hard-won democracy and the rule of law in South African courts at all levels, including alumni Justice Raymond Zondo, Chief Justice of South Africa, Justice Dikgang Moseneke, retired Deputy Chief Judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, and Justice Dhaya Pillay, Judge of the Labour Court and KwaZulu-Natal High Court.

Having afforded study opportunities to former activists and struggle heroes incarcerated on Robben Island, Unisa salutes alumni such as the late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (South African social rights activist and retired Anglican bishop), and the late Ahmed Kathrada (politician) for their roles in changing the course of South Africa's history.

Equally at home in leadership roles in the world of sports and broader society are accomplished alumni such as Temba Bavuma, captain of the South African national cricket team, the Proteas, in tests and ODI matches, Danny Jordaan, President of the South African Football Association, and Gio Aplon, Springbok wing extraordinaire. Other Unisa alumni who have achieved sporting distinction include cricketer and former Proteas captain, Kepler Wessels, and former Olympic athlete, Zola Budd.

As thought leaders, businesspeople, legal experts and acclaimed entertainers, Unisa alumni are actively shaping our society. Making their mark in diverse fields and capacities are Sizwe Nxasana (former Chief Executive Officer of FirstRand Limited and Telkom), Lesetja Kganyago (Governor of the South African Reserve Bank), Saki Macozoma (prominent businessman and a leader in civil society), Yvonne 'Chaka-Chaka' Mhinga (singer, businesswoman and philanthropist), Terence Nombembe (Chief Executive Officer of the South African Institute for Chartered Accountants and former Auditor-General), and Dr Thulani Dlamini (Chief Executive Officer the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research).



OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Unisa community is inspired by its vision to become the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity. Our vision defines everything that we do. It describes our wish to serve every country on the African continent and the broader global community while transcending language and cultural barriers. We are 100% committed to the communities and individuals we serve.

We are clear on our mission to be a comprehensive, open, distance and eLearning institution that produces excellent scholarship and research, provides quality tuition and fosters active community engagement. We are guided by the principles of life-long learning, student-centredness, innovation, and creativity. Through our efforts we contribute to the knowledge and information society, advance development, nurture a critical citizenry and ensure global sustainability.

We subscribe to the values of ethical and collective responsibility, integrity, innovation and excellence, responsive student-centredness, and dignity in diversity.



A photograph of the UNISA building at night. The building's facade is made of large, light-colored panels. The word "UNISA" is mounted on the wall in large, metallic, three-dimensional letters. To the right of "UNISA" is a stylized logo consisting of two curved lines. Below the logo, the words "university of south africa" are written in a smaller, lowercase font. The building is illuminated from below, and a large, leafy tree is visible on the right side of the frame. The sky is dark, and the overall atmosphere is serene.

UNISA | university of south africa

“A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination. But when you add to that a literate tongue or pen, then you have something very special.”

- Nelson Mandela

Contact us

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