

# ***Unisa Innovation Pioneers (UIP)***

## **Programme**

**2025 Call for Applications**

**Closing date: Friday, 23 May 2025**



This programme has been created to contribute meaningfully to the alleviation of unemployment in South Africa and moreover, within our network of graduates.

Upon developing a successful entrepreneurial ecosystem, we wish to encourage our entrepreneurs to employ graduates from UNISA.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

**ALL** Unisa alumni.

## THE GOAL OF THE UNISA PIONEERS PROGRAMME

This goal of the programme is to:

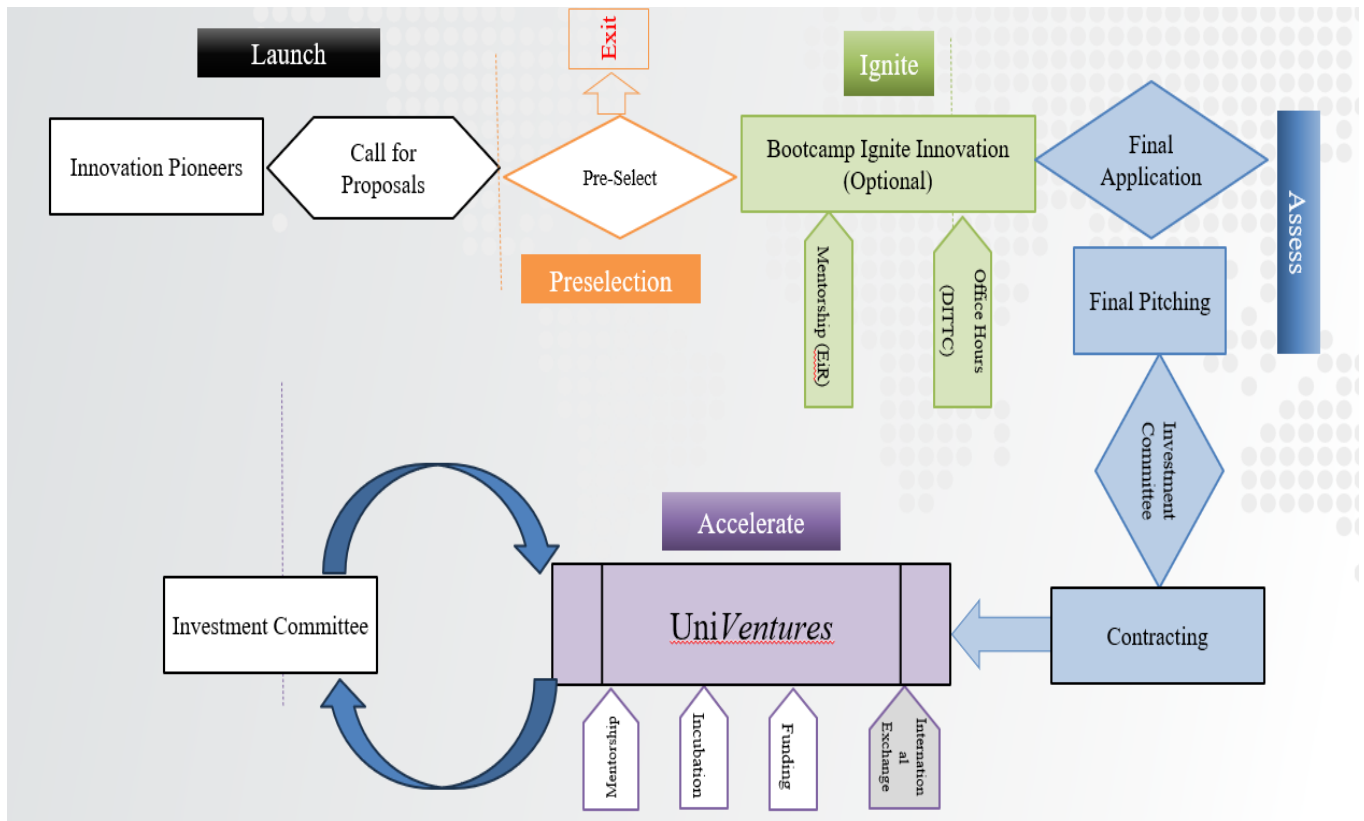
- Support the development of innovative solutions products/processes and solutions by the Unisa Alumni.
- Create new entrepreneurial opportunities for the Unisa Alumni.
- Boost socio-economic development in South Africa through research and innovation.
- Promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within our ecosystem.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO NOTE

- The idea/concept/product/solution must be *innovative* and targeted at addressing a challenge in society.
- An idea/concept/product/solution is considered *innovative* if it is new and has not been implemented before to solve the identified societal challenge or is an improvement over existing solutions wherein the improvement provides a significant benefit to the target audience or market.
- A *Societal Challenge* in this context refers to the problems that our society is grappling with. These may be national and cross-cutting, such as poverty, food security, access to health, achieving inclusive and equitable quality education, achieving gender parity, sluggish economic growth, unemployment, access to health care, access to cheap, reliable sources of energy or potable water, etc.

Some may be local, affecting only a particular sector or group of people. For more examples of some of the challenges: <https://www.theinnovationhub.com/innovation-programmes/openix-5>

## APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS



### Step 1. Call for Proposal

The call for proposals is announced at the beginning of each year.

### Step 2. Pre-selection

Interested participants must submit a proposal in the prescribed application template/form.

Proposals must be submitted to [dittc@Unisa.ac.za](mailto:dittc@Unisa.ac.za) by the due date – 23 May 2025

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria below:

### Evaluation Criteria for Pre-proposals (100% Total Weighting):

- **Problem Definition (20%)** – Clarity in identifying and defining the societal challenge.
- **Innovation (50%)** – Novelty of the solution or significant improvement over existing solutions.

- **Feasibility (20%)** – Viability considering technical aspects, team, partnerships, financial resources, and timelines.
  - **Potential Impact (10%)** – Expected positive effect on the identified challenge.
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### 3. Ignite Bootcamp

Qualifying projects will invited to a **five-day virtual or in-person Bootcamp**, where participants will:

- Refine their proposals.
  - Receive mentorship.
  - Submit their final proposals at least seven days the Bootcamp (no late submissions allowed).
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### 4. Assessment by the UIP Investment Committee

All complete proposals will be evaluated by the UIP Investment Committee (UIP IC) based on the following criteria:

- **Problem Definition (5%)** – Understanding of the identified challenge.
- **Customer/User Definition (5%)** – Clarity in identifying target customers and users.
- **Innovation (35%)** – Degree of originality and differentiation from existing solutions.
- **Feasibility (15%)** – Technical and financial viability.
- **Capabilities (15%)** – Expertise of the team or individual applicant.
- **Sustainability (10%)** – Long-term viability of the proposed solution.
- **Potential Impact (10%)** – Societal benefit of the solution.
- **Quality of Submission/Presentation (5%)** – Clarity and professionalism.

Applicants will be required to appear before the UIP IC to present their proposals.

A maximum of **10 proposals** will be selected for financial and non-investment.

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### 5. Contracting

The winning applicants will be required to conclude an investment agreement with Unisa or its subsidiary.

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### 6. Acceleration Phase

- **Release of Funding in tranches:** R500,000 per project, dispensed in tranches based on progress and compliance. Additional funding may be available.
- **Mentorship:** Access to dedicated mentors for project development.
- **Incubation Services:** Where available, incubation support will be provided.
- **Expert Access:** Commercialization specialists, IP professionals, and product design experts.

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- **Marketing Support:** Assistance in promoting the concept.
  - **International Exchange:** Opportunity to participate in a student exchange programme.(if available)

Inquiries may be directed to:

[dittc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:dittc@unisa.ac.za) (012 429 8549)