Unisa Research Impact Report
2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Document Terms and Abbreviations

Term/Abbreviation	Description
APP	Annual Performance Plan
CE	Community engagement
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DRS	Directorate: Research Support
KPIs	Key performance indicators
SFAs	Strategic focus areas
THE	Times Higher Education
Unisa	University of South Africa
WoS	Web of Science

InCites Metrics

Metric	Description
Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI)	The CNCI of a document is calculated by dividing the actual count of citing items by the expected citation rate for documents with the same document type, year of publication and subject area. When a document is assigned to more than one subject area, an average of the ratios of the actual to expected citations is used.
Citation Impact	The Citation Impact of a set of documents is calculated by dividing the total number of citations by the total number of publications. Citation Impact shows the average number of citations of a document.

Metric	Description
International Collaborations	The International Collaborations indicator shows the number of publications that have been found with at least two different countries among the affiliations of the co-authors. The definition of an internationally collaborative document is a relatively simple indicator that only considers whether a document is international (two or more countries) or not. It does not consider the total number of countries represented in the publication.

SciVal Metrics

Metric	Description
Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI)	FWCI in SciVal indicates how the number of citations of an entity's publications compares with the average number of citations of all other similar publications in the data universe: how do the citations of this entity's publications compare with the world average?
Field-Weighted Views Impact	FWVI indicates how the number of views of an entity's publications compares with the average number of views of all other similar publications in the same data universe: how do the views of this entity's publications compare with the world average for that database?
h-indices	The h-indices in SciVal indicate a balance between the productivity (scholarly output) and citation impact (citation count) of an entity's publications. The h-index gives information about the performance of researchers and research areas. The h-index of an entity is 9 if the top 9 most-cited publications each have at least nine citations; it is 13 if an entity's top 13 most-cited publications each have at least 13 citations, and so on.

Metric	Description
Collaboration	Collaboration in SciVal indicates the extent to which an entity's publications have international, national, or institutional co-authorship and single authorship. This number is counted unless the percentage symbol (%) is visible. Each publication is assigned to one of four mutually exclusive collaboration types based on its affiliation information: international, national, institutional, or single authorship. A single publication may display each international, national and institutional collaboration in its affiliation information. Still, a single collaboration type is assigned to ensure that the sum of an entity's publications across the four categories adds up to 100% of the publications with the necessary affiliation information.
Collaboration Impact	Collaboration Impact in SciVal indicates the citation impact of an entity's publications with particular types of geographical collaboration: how many citations does this entity's internationally, nationally, or institutionally co-authored publications have, as well as those with a single author?
Mass Media	Mass Media refers to the total number of times the media referred to researchers of the selected institution(s). Mass Media considers media articles from 2011 onwards and is currently focused on media articles in English only. Mass Media mentions have a different range of coverage depending on the medium: print media sources are covered from 2011 onwards, whereas online media sources are covered from 2014 onwards.

DOCUMENTS REFERENCED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Description	Owner
High Impact Journals Framework	DRS
Unisa Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025	Council
Annual Performance Plan (APP)	VC
2023 Benchmarking Research Output Analysis	DII
UNISA International Collaboration Framework – Implementation Plan	DRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The Unisa Research Impact Report is an annual publication by the Research Department, reflecting the institution's alignment with its Strategic Plan 2021–2025, now in its fourth year of execution, as well as the 2022 Annual Performance Plan (APP). Although the Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs) transitioned to a pillar-based framework in 2022, this report adheres to the previous reporting structure, as the full implementation of the pillar system commenced in 2023. Accordingly, the 2025 edition of the Research Impact Report will be comprehensively aligned with Pillar 2: Propel Research Innovation. The report offers a rigorous analysis of global and national ranking systems that evaluate and benchmark Unisa's research performance.

Key Highlights

1) **Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) also known as the Shanghai Ranking:**
   - Unisa ranked in the 901-1000 band globally, 20th among the benchmark group, 19th in Africa, and 8th nationally.
   - Improvements were noted in Nature and Science publications (0.0 in 2021, 2022 and 2023 to 1.4 in 2020 and 2024), and Per Capita Performance (9.7 to 10.5) from 2023 to 2024.
   - Awards and Highest Citations (HiCi) remained unchanged, with a slight decline in the Alumni score from 13,8 in 2023 to 13,7 in 2024.
   - For Publications (PUB), Unisa's score increased from 21,2 in 2020 to 23,6 in 2021 before declining to 22,8 in 2022, 20,3 in 2023 and returning to 22,8 in 2024.

2) **Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) 2025 results based on 2024 submission:**
   - Times Higher Education ranked 2 092 institutions from 115 countries of the 2 857 institutions or 73,2% of the institutions that submitted data for the ranking.
   - The number of South African universities in the ranking increased from 12 to 14, with two new entrants joining the ranking, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (reporter status in 2024) and the University of Fort Hare (not submitting information before).
   - The leading South African university was once again the University of Cape Town, with a decrease in ranking position from 167th to joint 180th, based on a marginal decrease in their overall score from 60,9 to 59,7.
   - Four universities in SA improved their scores, the University of the Western Cape by 2,2, the University of Johannesburg by 1,8, the University of KwaZulu-Natal by 0,9 and North West University also by 0,2.

- Eight universities in SA had lower scores (some marginally lower), the University of the Witwatersrand (-0,3), the University of Pretoria (-0,7), the University of Cape Town (-1,2), Stellenbosch University (-1,3), the University of Venda (-1,6), the University of the Free State (-1,7), **Unisa (-3,1),** Durban University of Technology (-5,3).

- With regards to ODeL universities, Anadolu University improved its ODeL rank from 5th to 3rd. The Open University Catalonia and the Open University UK maintained their top two positions. The other ODeL universities dropped in their ODeL ranking, **Unisa** from 3rd to 5th, the National University of Distance Education from 4th to 6th, and Hellenic Open University from 6th to 7th.

- **Unisa's** highest-ranked pillar was research quality (ranked 1 148th), with industry as the lowest-ranked pillar (ranked 1 465th), teaching second (ranked 1 275th), and research environment third (ranked 1 318th).

3) Round University Ranking (RUR):
- With the Round University Ranking (RUR), worldwide 1 169 universities were ranked.

- **Unisa** was ranked 683rd globally, 11th in Africa, and 1st among ODeL institutions for 2024.

- Seven South African universities were ranked, with **Unisa** in position 7 nationally.

4) US News Best Global Universities Ranking (2024-2025):
- **Unisa** was jointly ranked 861st globally out of 2,250 universities, 37th among benchmark universities, and 9th nationally.
- Strong performance in specific metrics for Unisa included Research Reputation (793rd), Regional Research Reputation – Africa (23rd), Publications (880th), Books (192nd), Conferences (726th), normalised citation impact (1568th) and total citations (978th).

5) Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR):
- For the 2024 edition, 20 966 institutions were evaluated, of which those ranked in the top 2 000 were published in the Global 2 000 list, and 66 were benchmark universities (African and ODeL universities).
- **Unisa** ranked in the top 6.2% of evaluated universities and 945th for employability
- For Research, sixteen universities were ranked in the global top 2 000 (only the Open University of Catalonia was not in the top 2 000), and **Unisa** was ranked 1 250th.

6) Ranking Web of Universities (Webometrics)
- A total of 32 142 institutions were included in the ranking, of which 2 087 were from Africa. This included 124 South African institutions.
- **Unisa** was among the top 2,3% of institutions worldwide (736 out of 32 142).
- The Open University UK (world rank 17) was the leader among 56 ODeL universities included in the ranking, and **Unisa** (world rank 736) was third among the ODeL universities worldwide.

7) SCImago Institutions Ranking (SIR):

- Overall, 9 054 institutions were included in the SCImago 2024 ranking, of which 4 762 were universities, including 281 African universities.
- Global rank for **Unisa** was 1,080th out of 4,762 institutions.
- For research among ODeL institutions, **Unisa** was ranked 3rd (3 791, world rank)
- For innovation, **Unisa** (3 917 world rank), ranked 17th out of the 23 South African universities.
- **Unisa** had strong performance in societal impact (544th globally) and moderate performance in research (3,791st globally).

8) University Ranking of Academic Performance (URAP):

- **Unisa** was ranked 970th globally out of 3,000 universities.
- **Unisa** was 9th among the 22 South African universities in the top 3,000 published universities.

9) Times Higher Education Impact Rankings:

- Unisa was placed in the 601-800 band globally out of 1,963 universities.
- There was a decline in overall score of Unisa from 66.7 (2023) to 65.3 (2024).

  o **SDG Performance:**

    ▪ **SDG 4: Quality Education:** Decline in ranking (401-600 band for 2024 vs. 201-300 band in 2023); ranked 4th among South African universities.

    ▪ **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** Best-performing SDG (301-400 band); strong research contribution and top-tier publications.

    ▪ **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:** Top half globally (401-600 band); strong research performance.

    ▪ **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy:** Top half globally (401-600 band); excellent publication performance.

    ▪ **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** New entrant; ranked in the 401-600 band.

    ▪ **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:** Top half globally (401-600 band).

    ▪ **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** New entrant; ranked in the 401-600 band.

    ▪ **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals:** Ranked in the 801-1000 band; strong research collaboration with low and low-middle income countries.

National Rankings

Research Publications Output:

- Unisa retained 8th position relative to the sector regarding overall publications output- a position it has held since 2017.
- Regarding Unisa's per capita research publications output, a 7,7% increase was observed, from 0,78 to 0,84 between 2021 and 2022, improving its position relative to the sector from 13th to 12th.
- Most of Unisa's publications were in Web of Sciences journals and Scopus from 2019 to 2021, then from 2022 to 2023, Scopus accounted for 54,2% and 40,9% of journal publications, respectively.

Catalytic Niche Areas (CNAs):

- Unisa's CAN publications were mostly in natural sciences or biotechnological studies, accounting for approximately 24% of 2023 publications and 17,6% of research output units.

Creative Output and Innovations:

- Proportionally, Unisa's contribution to overall awarded creative output units increased from 3,2% in 2021 to 7,6% in 2022
- Unisa was awarded 54,5% fewer innovations output units for 2022 compared to 2021 (2,00 vs. 4,40).

Overall Research Publications Performance:

- Unisa had more publication outputs listed for SciVal compared to InCites for 2019-2023 (10 984 vs. 9 116) and consequently better bibliometric and scientometric values for SciVal compared to InCites.
- InCites's citation count was 80 024, reflecting 25 389 citations less than SciVal, with a category normalised citation impact of 1,0 and 8,48 citations per 71,86% cited publications.
- InCites had more open-access publications than SciVal from 2019 to 2023, with its highest proportion being in 2023 (65,1% vs. 53,1%). SciVal's 2023 proportion, 53,1%, was also its highest for the period under observation.
- International collaborations increased from 42,1% and 34,3% to 46,6% and 43,7% between 2019 and 2023 for InCites and SciVal, respectively.
- In terms of researcher performance according to InCites and SciVal , Maaza ranked first place for both. However, Kaviyarasu, Mamba, Msagati, Nkambule and Odhiambo ranked second, third, fifth and sixth on InCites and third, second, sixth, ninth and fourth, respectively, for SciVal.
- With regards to media mentions, Unisa had 401 print media and 4 071 mass media mentions between 2019 and 2023. Its online media mentions increased by 107,7%,

from 599 in 2019 to 1244 in 2023, and its print media mentions increased by 60,9%, from 69 to 111 for the same period.

- For 2019-2023, approximately 13% of Unisa's publications output were in the top 10% most cited SciVal (Scopus) indexed journals worldwide, a drop from the 16% achieved for 2018-2023.

Summary of Key Actions to be undertaken:

a) Enhance publication outputs to improve Unisa's position in DHET rankings and per capita research publications output.

b) Focus on publishing in top-tier journals to increase the proportion of publications in the top 10% and improve CNCI and FWCI scores.

c) Strengthen research funding, especially through industry collaboration, to sustain and enhance research quality and productivity.

d) Raise awareness globally about Unisa's research through strategic dissemination, including targeted efforts to improve views, downloads, and citation statistics.

e) Intensify efforts by the College of Graduate Studies to ensure university-wide understanding and adoption of CNAs.

f) Expand focus areas beyond Natural Sciences, 4IR, and Health Studies to ensure balanced representation across all CNAs.

g) Improve the quality and quantity of international collaborations, especially with low- and low-middle-income countries, to enhance Unisa's global research impact.

h) Foster partnerships with leading global institutions in Africa, Europe, and the East to learn and adapt best practices in research quality.

i) Mitigate instances of bad publicity through proactive media engagement and reputation management strategies.

j) Leverage online and print media to amplify Unisa's global and national achievements.

k) Develop strategies to improve performance in SDG-related activities, especially in areas where scores have declined, such as SDG 4 (Quality Education).

l) Address the decline in innovation output units by fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

m) Regularly monitor and benchmark Unisa's performance against national and global peers, focusing on the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), THE WUR, US News, and SCImago rankings.

n) Identify and address gaps in key performance areas, including per capita scores, teaching reputation, and publications.

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Strategic Alignment

The Unisa Research Impact Report finds expression in Unisa's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which is now in its fourth year of implementation, and the 2022 Annual Performance Plan (APP). In 2022, Unisa revised its strategy, replacing the previous Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs) with new Pillars and Enablers.   Previously, SFA 1 combined teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, as shown below:

SFA 1: Accelerating the shift towards becoming a leading African ODeL, comprehensive university in teaching and learning, research, innovation, and community engagement based on scholarship.

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with Strategic Focus Area (SFA) 1 included KPI 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 as well as SFA 4, KPI 4.4, as outlined below.

KPI 1.3: Improve Research Output by increasing per capita research output units from 1.6 to 2.0 overall per permanent academic staff.

Figure 1 below provides a high-level overview of the impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities aligning with KPI 1.3.

Figure 1: KPI 1.3 High-level overview of impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities
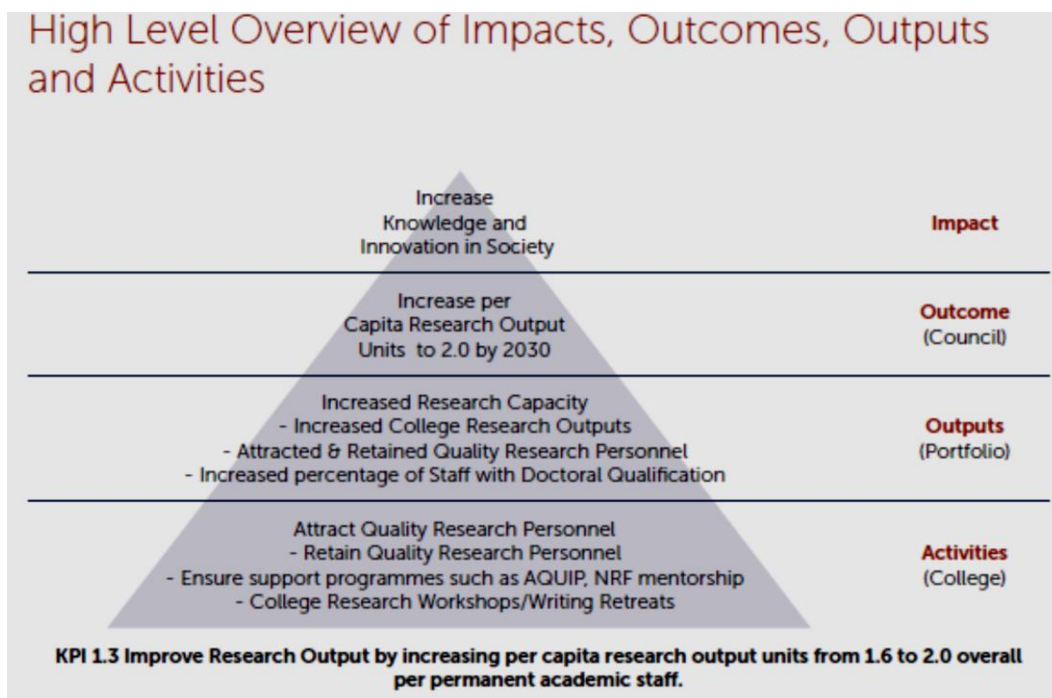
Figure 2 below provides KPI 1.3's targets.

Figure 2: KPI 1.3 Targets

KPI 1.3 Improve Research Output by increasing per capita research output units from 1.6 to 2.0 overall per permanent academic staff.			
2021: Research Output 1.6 2022: Research Output 1.6 2023: Research Output 1.62 2024: Research Output 1.65 2025: Research Output 1.7	Research Output and Influence per capita: 1.6	31 December 2030	R: R&I and TLCESS A: Council & VC S: ICT C: - I: Senate

Table 1 below provides KPI 1.3's outcome.

Table 1: KPI 1.3 Outcome

			TARGET	
DESIRED IMPACT		**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (OUTCOME)**	**Baseline (2021)**	**2023**
Increase knowledge and innovation in society	1.3	Improve research output by increasing per capita research output units from 1.6 to 2.0 overall per permanent academic staff.	1.6	1.62 for 2020

KPI 1.4: Improve the Research Citation Index to one basis point above the national SA Index yearly.

Figure 3 below provides a high-level overview of KPI 1.4's impact, outcomes, outputs and activities.

Figure 3: *KPI 1.4 High-level overview of impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities*

KPI 1.4 Improve Research Citation Index to be one basis point above national SA Index yearly.
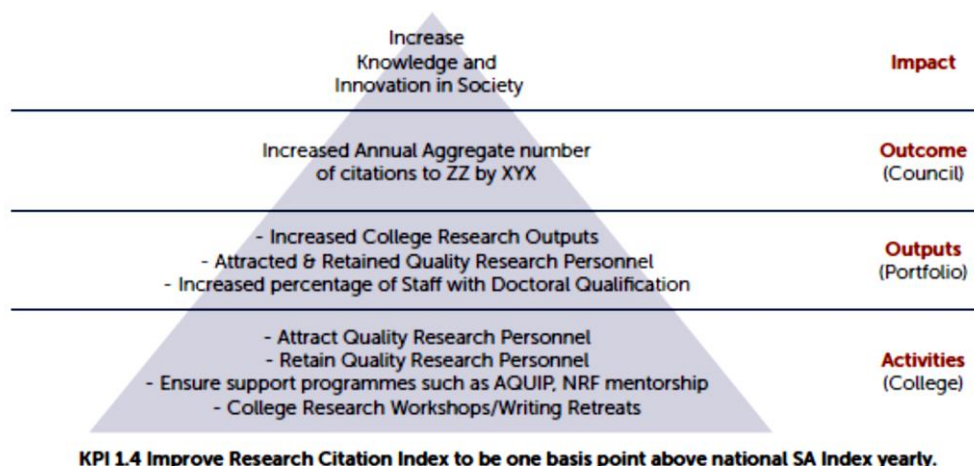
Figure 4 below provides KPI 1.4's targets.

Figure 4: KPI 1.4 Targets

KPI 1.4 Improve Research Citation Index to be one basis point above national SA Index yearly.			
2021: Aggregate Research Citation Index of all UNISA researchers of 27 2022: Aggregate Research Citation Index of all UNISA researchers of 29. 2023: Aggregate Research Citation Index of all UNISA researchers of 31. 2024: Aggregate Research Citation Index of all UNISA researchers of 33. 2025: Aggregate Research Citation Index of all UNISA researchers of 35.	25 (Times Higher Education Citation Index)	31 December 2030	R: R&I and TLCESS A: Council & VC S: ICT C: - I: Senate

Table 2 below provides KPI 1.4's outcome.

Table 2: KPI 1.4 Outcome

DESIRED IMPACT		KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (OUTCOME)	TARGET	
			Baseline (2021)	2023
Increase knowledge and innovation in society	1.4	Improve the research citation index to one basis point above the national SA index yearly.	27	31

KPI 1.5: Improve the collaborations in the area of community engagement (CE) to increase CE-related research and engaged pro bono teaching outputs and engagements with public and private businesses.

Figure 5 below provides a high-level overview of KPI 1.5's impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities.

Figure 5: High-level overview of KPI 1.5 impacts, outcomes, ouputs and activities.

High Level Overview of Impacts, Outcomes, Outputs and Activities

Increase Knowledge and Innovation in Society	**Impact**
Increased collaborations in community engagement with other research institutions or industry	**Outcome** (Council)
- Increased number of Community Engagement (CE) initiatives - Increased Third Income Stream - Increased Commissioned Research - Increased CE Research Outputs	**Outputs** (Portfolio)
- Execute institutional Community Engagement Plan - Attract/seek Commissioned Research Opportunities - Support CE Research Outputs Production	**Activities** (College)

KPI 1.5 Improve the Collaborations in area of Community Engagement to Increase CE related research and engaged pro bono teaching outputs, and engagements with public and private business.

Figure 6 below provides KPI 1.5's targets.

Figure 6: KPI 1.5 Targets

Annual Targets (Measurable Outcomes) (2021-2025)	Current Baseline (2020)	End Date for Achievement of Outcome	Roles
KPI 1.5 Improve the Collaborations in area of Community Engagement to Increase CE related research and engaged pro bono teaching outputs, and engagements with public and private business.			
2021: 2.5% CE Research Outputs equal to baseline & 2.5% Increase income from baseline 2022: 2.5% Increase from 2021 level of CE related research and income 2023: 2.5% Increase from 2021 level of CE related research and income 2024: 2.5% Increase from 2021 level of CE related research and income 2025: 2.5% Increase from 2021 level of CE related research and income	Provide Baseline	No end date	R: R&I and TLCESS A: Council & VC S: ICT C: - I: -

Table 3 below provides KPI 1.5's outcome.

Table 3: KPI 1.5 Outcome

DESIRED IMPACT	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (OUTCOME)		TARGET	
			Baseline (2021)	2023
Increase knowledge and innovation in society	1.5	Improve the collaboration in community engagement (CE) to increase CE-related research and engaged pro bono teaching outputs and engagements with public and private businesses.	2.5% CE research outputs increase on baseline & 2.5% increase in income.	2.5% increase from 2021 level of CE research and income.

SFA 4: To accelerate the transformation of governance, student and workforce composition, the research agenda, and the curriculum.

KPI 4.4: Advance African scholarship through global collaborations.

Figure 7 below provides a high-level overview of KPI 4.4's impact, outcome, outputs and activities.

*Figure 7: High-level overview of KPI 4.4 impacts, outcome, outputs and activities.*
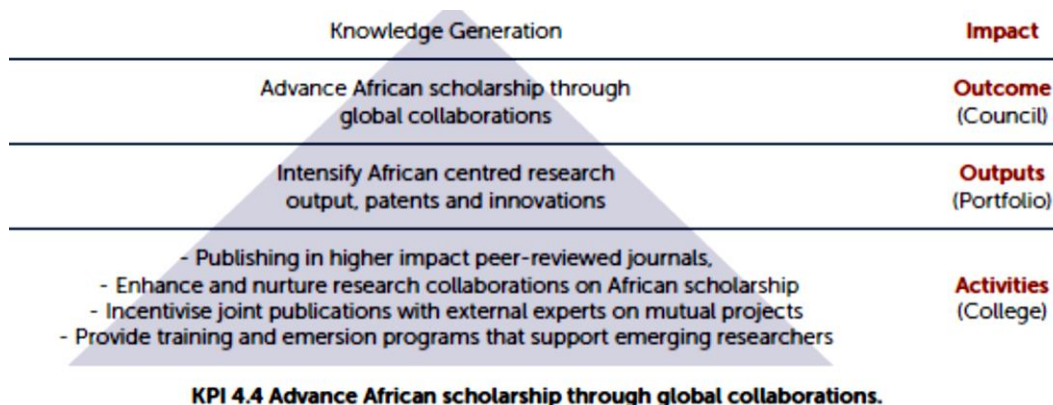
Figure 8 below provides KPI 4.4's targets.

Annual Targets (Measurable Outcomes) (2021-2025)	Current Baseline (2020)	End Date for Achievement of Outcome	Roles
KPI 4.4 Advance African scholarship through global collaborations.			
2021: Develop a composite index for the global influence of African Scholarship and determine a baseline of UNISA's contribution to the index 2022: Raise UNISA's contribution to the Index by 5% 2023: Raise UNISA's contribution to the Index by 5% 2024: Raise UNISA's contribution to the Index by 5% 2025: Raise UNISA's contribution to the Index by 5%	No baseline exists	31 December 2030	R: TLCESS & R&I A: Council & VC S: - C: - I: -

Table 4 below provides KPI 4.4's outcome.

Table 4: KPI 4.4 Outcome

DESIRED IMPACT		KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (OUTCOME)	TARGET	
			Baseline (2021)	2023
Increase knowledge and innovation in society	4.4	Advance African scholarship through global collaborations.	None	Raise Unisa's contribution to the index by 5%

In the updated 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, the following Pillars and Enablers were introduced:

- **Pillar 1**: Advance Technology Mediated, Quality Learning and Teaching
- **Pillar 2**: Propel Research Innovation
- **Pillar 3**: Pivot Engaged Scholarship and Global Impact
- **Pillar 4**: Strengthen Student Support Services
- **Pillar 5**: Resource the Future

The enablers are as follows:

- **Enabler 1**: People
- **Enabler 2**: Marketing and Communication
- **Enabler 3**: Digitisation and Digitalisation
- **Enabler 4**: Governance, Reporting and Management Systems
- **Enabler 5**: Financial Sustainability
- **Enabler 6**: Infrastructure

Although the SFAs were restructured into pillars in 2022, the current report follows the previous reporting framework, as the transition to pillars was fully implemented only in 2023. Consequently, the 2025 Unisa Research Impact Report will be fully aligned with Pillar 2: Propel Research Innovation.

2 UNISA'S RESEARCH AND IMPACT RANKINGS

2.1 Overview of Global Rankings

Universities participating in global rankings demonstrate their commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and global competitiveness, enhancing their reputation on the international stage. The exact number of universities varies daily, but estimates are at least more than 20,000 up to almost 30,000. When considering ranking results, it is important to note that if the results include 2,000 universities, it is approximately 10% of the total universities. See Table 5 below for the number of universities evaluated and ranked and the results published for each of the ranking systems in which Unisa participates in.

Table 5: Number of universities evaluated, ranked and published for global ranking systems in which Unisa participates

Ranking system	Evaluated	Ranked and published
Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)	Unknown, > 2 500	2 500 ranked, but only the top 1 000 published
Center of World Rankings (CWUR)	20 966	Top 2 000 published
Ranking Web of Universities (Webometrics)	32 142, including some FET institutions	All 32 142
Round University Ranking (RUR)	2 459	2 459
SCImago Institutions Ranking (Scimago)	9 054 institutions, of which 4 763 are universities	All ranked institutions/ universities
Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE WUR)	Differs between 2 000 and 3 000, most recent (2024/2025) 2 092	All ranked
University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP)	Number unknown	Top 3 000 published
Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (THE IR) - Ranking for each SDG plus Overall ranking	Varies between different SDGs and also for overall between 628 for SDG 14 and 2 031 for SDG 17	All ranked universities, overall and per SDG

Furthermore, there are many global rankings, each with its own focus, criteria, and weights. It is, therefore, important to consider the criteria and metrics used and their weights when interpreting the results. Also, each ranking system sources data from different databases. Each ranking system provides a specific angle in understanding performance. The discussions below highlight key aspects of the criteria and metrics and associated weights.

The three best-known rankings are the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), the QS World University Rankings (QS WUR) and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR). The criteria for these three ranking systems are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Criteria, metrics and weights of the three dominant global ranking systems

Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)	
Criteria	**% weight**
Alumni recipients of Nobel prizes and Field medals	10%
Awards received by staff (Nobel prizes and Field medals)	20%
Highly cited researchers	20%
Papers in Nature and Science	20%
Papers indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation Index	20%
Per Capity Performance	10%
QS World University Ranking (QS WUR)	
Criteria	**% weight**
Academic reputation	30%
Citations per faculty	20%
Employer reputation	15%
Faculty student ratio	10%
International students	5%
International faculty	5%
International research network	5%
Employment outcomes	5%
Sustainability	5%
Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR)	
Criteria	**% weight**
Teaching	**29,5%**
Teaching reputation	15,0%
Student-staff ratio	4,5%
Doctorate-Bachelor ratio	2,0%
Doctorate-Staff ratio	5,5%
Institutional income	2,5%
Research environment	**29,0%**
Research reputation	18,0%
Research income	5,5%
Research productivity	5,5%
Research quality	**30,0%**
Citation impact	15,0%
Research strength	5,0%
Research excellence	5,0%
Research influence	5,0%
International outlook	**7,5%**
International students	2,5%
International staff	2,5%
International co-authorship	2,5%
(Studying abroad)	0,0%
Industry	**4,0%**
Industry income	2,0%
Patents	2,0%

Unisa opted not to participate in the QS WUR, mainly because the reputation surveys carry 45% of the weight, and the respondents are mainly from North America and Europe. Also, the weight of the student-staff ratio carries a further 10%, which is highly discriminatory against ODeL universities, such as Unisa. Although the Times Higher Education WUR also use reputation surveys, their weight is less than the QS WUR and the weight of the student-staff ratio, which makes THE WUR more suitable for an ODeL university such as Unisa than the QS WUR. In addition, the THE WUR include more metrics to provide a more comprehensive result than the QS WUR. Unisa therefore uses ARWU and THE WUR as its main research ranking systems but supplements these with a number of other global rankings such as the Centre for World Universities Ranking (CWUR), Ranking Web of Universities (Webometrics), the Round University Ranking (RUR), SCImago Institutions Ranking (SCImago), University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP) and the US News Best Global Universities (US News), which each provide a specific insight into research performance. Therefore, although there is some overlap between these ranking systems, overall, they provide a comprehensive insight into Unisa's research performance and impact.

Furthermore, Unisa also specifically use the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (THE IR) as a measure of impact as this ranking system is linked to sustainable development and the ranking of each of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) includes a research component which contributes 30% to the overall score. Although Unisa's focus is mainly on Africa and, therefore, the Africa Agenda 2063 (Agenda 2063) and the National Development Plan (NDP), there is a more than 80% overlap between the SDGs, which means that it serves as a proxy to for insight into the contribution of research to real-life issues.

In addition to an individual ranking for each SDG, there is an overall ranking based on the compulsory SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals and the university's three best-performing elective SDGs. For comparison, each SDG's scores are scaled from 0 to 100. This may not be the three in which the university is ranked highest or has scored highest in the unscaled scores. Also, each university can decide which SDGs to send information and evidence based on their priorities. For the THE IR, the criterion for each SDG differs, but all include a research component of 27%, although the metrics vary based on the nature of the SDG.

The various global rankings can be clustered into two main groups: **research-focused rankings and sustainability focused rankings**. Apart from THE IR, the other ranking systems

used are mainly research focused as they either exclusively or mainly include aspects of research. Although some do include other aspects as well, most of the metrics and weights are on research. In some cases, the ranking is based:

a) exclusively on information extracted from various databases,

b) information from various databases, surveys conducted by the ranking agency and information provided by the institutions themselves, e.g. Clarivate and Times Higher Education rankings and

c) information as in (b) plus institutional profiles from a third party such as Clarivate for the US News Best Global Universities and Round University Rankings.

Each of the global rankings discussed provides an aspect or aspects that provide some insight into Unisa's research performance. However, Unisa focuses on the Times Higher Education World University Ranking as it is comprehensive, and most of the criteria are not discriminating against distance education institutions, or where criteria are discriminating, e.g. student-staff ratio, the weighting is not excessive.

2.2   Highlights of Unisa's Performance in Global Rankings

The section below provides highlights of Unisa's performance in global rankings.

2.2.1   Research Focused Rankings

2.2.1.1   Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)

The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), also known as the Shanghai Ranking, is published by the Center for World-Class Universities of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University and focuses solely on research. ARWU was the first ranking system and remains one of the most prestigious, mainly because of the exclusivity of the criteria, Nobel prize-winning alumni and staff and publications in Nature and Science, which focus on research-intensive universities, especially those strong on science subjects.

The criteria, performance indicators and the associated weights used by ARWU were provided in Table 6 above. The criteria are expanded a bit more below.

- **Alumni** refers to the number of alumni of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals – different weights are set according to the periods of obtaining the degrees, with more recent graduates carrying more weight.

- **Award** refers to the number of staff of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals while working for the institution – different weights are set according to the period when they were winners, with more recent winners carrying a higher weight and where the Nobel Prize was shared or where the winner was associated with more than one institution, the weight is set according to the proportion contributed.

- The number of **highly cited researchers** (HiCi) is selected by Clarivate in January of the ranking year – only the primary affiliation of the highly cited researchers is used.

- The number of **research articles** in Nature and Science in the most recently completed five years before the ranking year are used and contributions are based on the order of author affiliations. For institutions specialised in humanities and social sciences, such as the London School of Economics, Nature and Science are not considered, and the weight of Nature and Science is relocated to other indicators.

- Number of **papers** indexed in the Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Index in the most recent completed year preceding the ranking year.

- The per capita performance (PCP) is a weighted score of the above five indicators divided by the number of full-time equivalent academic staff.

Key highlights from the overall 2024 results worldwide:

- The 2 500 universities that are evaluated and ranked represent the cream of the crop.

- Although more than 2 500 universities were evaluated and ranked, only the best 1 000 were published, therefore the cream of the cream.

- The top 1 000 universities included universities from 64 countries (29 from Europe, 20 from Asia, seven from the Americas, six from Africa and two from Oceania).

- The regions with the most universities in the top 1 000 were Asia with 362, Europe with 343, the Americas with 237, Oceania with 38 and Africa with 20.

- China had 203 universities among the top 1 000 universities compared to 183 from the United States. However, the United States again dominated the top 100 universities, with 38 (14 from China) and 114 of the top 500 (91 from China).

To evaluate Unisa's performance in further context, Table 7 below summarises the performances of Unisa and our benchmark universities (African and ODeL universities) in the ARWU 2024 ranking.

Table 7: Comparative performance of Unisa and its benchmark universities in the ARWU 2024 ranking.

Worldwide rank (top 1 000 of 2 500 ranked)	Benchmark rank (n=21)	Africa rank (n=20)	South African rank (n=8)	University	Country	Total score	Alumni score	Award score	HiCi score	N & S score	PUB score	PCP score
201-300	1	1	1	University of Cape Town	South Africa	15,27	16,6	0,0	11,4	12,8	35,1	17,5
301-400	2	2	2	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa	14,29	16,6	0,0	6,6	12,8	35,2	17,1
301-400	3	3		Cairo University	Egypt	12,35	17,4	0,0	0,0	3,2	40,7	18,3
401-500	4	4	3	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	10,94	0,0	0,0	6,6	9,6	31,3	14,4
401-500	5	5	4	University of Pretoria	South Africa	10,7	0,0	0,0	9,3	7,2	31,2	11,6
501-600	6	6	5	North-West University	South Africa	9,92	10,5	0,0	6,6	5,9	24,5	14,7
501-600	7	7	6	University of KwaZulu-Natal	South Africa	9,55	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,3	30,6	9,7
501-600	8	8	7	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	9,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,0	33,4	14,2
601-700	9	9		Alexandria University	Egypt	9,26	11,7	0,0	0,0	2,5	31,0	13,9
601-700	10	10		Ain Shams University	Egypt	8,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,4	31,3	13,6
601-700	11	11		Addis Ababa University	Ethiopia	8,48	16,6	0,0	0,0	5,4	23,0	11,4
601-700	12	12		Mansoura University	Egypt	8,33	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,4	33,1	14,3
701-800	**13**			**The Open University**	**United Kingdom**	**7,97**	**0,0**	**0,0**	**6,6**	**9,1**	**18,6**	**11,1**
701-800	14	13		Al-Azhar University	Egypt	7,87	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	30,7	13,3
801-900	15	14		Zagazig University	Egypt	7,07	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	29,1	12,5
901-1000	16	15		Hassan II University of Casablanca	Morocco	6,9	0,0	0,0	6,5	2,9	20,5	9,2
901-1000	17	16		Suez Canal University	Egypt	6,85	0,0	0,0	6,5	2,9	20,3	9,1
901-1000	18	17		Tanta University	Egypt	6,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,4	26,9	11,4
901-1000	19	18		University of Ghana	Ghana	6,47	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	22,4	9,9
901-1000	*20*	*19*	*8*	*University of South Africa*	*South Africa*	*6,41*	*13,8*	*0,0*	*0,0*	*0,0*	*20,3*	*9,7*
901-1000	21	20		University of Sfax	Tunisia	6,31	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	24,3	10,5

Note: South African universities are indicated in italic font, ODeL universities in bold and other African universities in normal font.

Highlights included:

- The top 1 000 universities included 21 benchmark universities (ODeL and African).

- As of 2023, only two ODeL universities were included in the top 1 000, the Open University UK (OUUK) and Unisa. Despite a slight increase in their total score, the OUUK dropped from the 601-700 band to the 701-800 band, while Unisa remained in the same band despite a decrease in total score.

- Among the African universities, South Africa and Egypt had the most universities (eight each) in the top 1 000 universities, although South Africa had four in the top 500 compared to only one from Egypt. Ethiopia, Morocco, Tunisia, and Ghana had one university each in the top 1 000 but none in the top 500.

- The South African universities decreased from nine (9) to eight (8) between 2023 and 2024.

- Unisa was again in the 901-1000 band, 20th in the benchmark group, 19th in Africa and 8th nationally. In comparison, overall, Unisa was also in the 901-1000 band in 2022 and 2023, in the 601-700 band in 2021 and in the 801-900 band in 2020. At the national level, Unisa was in joint 8th position in 2020 and maintained the 8th position in 2023 and 2024.

- For Alumni, Unisa's score changed from 14,4 in 2020 to 14,1 in 2021 and 2022, 13,8 in 2023 and 13,7 in 2024.

- For Awards, Unisa's score remained 0,0, the same as that of all South African universities.

- For Highest Citations (HiCi), Unisa's score was mostly 0,0 for 2020 to 2024, except for 2021, when its score was 7,3 in 2021.

- For Nature and Science (N&S), Unisa's score was 0,0 in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and 1,4 in 2020 and 2024.

- For Publications (PUB), Unisa's score increased from 21,2 in 2020 to 23,6 in 2021 before declining to 22,8 in 2022, 20,3 in 2023 and returning to 22,8 in 2024.

- Unisa's per capita performance (PCP) score changed from 9,3 in 2020 to 10,6 in 2021, 10,4 in 2022, 9,7 in 2023 and 10,5 in 2024.

- Therefore, areas recording improvements between 2023 and 2024 were Nature and Science, Publications, and per capita performance, while Awards and Highest citations remained unchanged, and Alumni declined marginally.

2.2.1.2 Times Higher Education World University Rankings (WUR)

Although the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (WUR) focus mainly on research, e.g., research environment contributes 29% (comprising research reputation 18%, research income 5,5% and research productivity 5,5%), research quality contributes 30% (comprising citation impact 15%, research strength 5%, research excellence 5% and research influence 5%), teaching (the learning environment) contribute 29,5% also include aspects of research (teaching reputation 15%, staff-to-student ratio 4,5%, doctorate-to-bachelors ratio 2%, doctorates-awarded-to-academic-staff ratio 5,5% and institutional income 2,5%), international outlook contribute 7,5% (comprising proportion of international students 2,5%, proportion of international staff 2,5% and international collaboration 2,5%) and industry contribute 4% (comprising industry income 2% and patents 2%).

THE WUR 2025 results based on 2024 submission

(a)   Key highlights from worldwide results

- For the 2025 results, Times Higher Education ranked 2 092 institutions from 115 countries of the 2 857 institutions or 73,2% of the institutions that submitted

data for the ranking. In comparison, in the 2024 ranking, 1 907 institutions were ranked from 108 countries. Included institutions that submitted data but were not ranked received reporter status; therefore, 765 institutions.

- A total of 185 institutions were new entrants to the ranking, including two South African universities, *Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University* (last year reporter status) and the *University of Fort Hare* (did not submit data last year) and one ODeL university, Ho Chi Minh City Open University (last year reporter status).

- The top-ranked universities continue to be dominated by USA universities, with 13 of the top 20 (7 in the top 10), followed by four universities from Europe (three from the UK and one from Switzerland) and three from Asia (two from China and one from Singapore).

- There were no new entrants among the top 20 universities.

- The University of Oxford was ranked first for the ninth consecutive year, bolstered by significant improvements in industry engagement and teaching and breaking the previous record of eight consecutive years by Harvard University between 2004 and 2011.

- Although the universities among the top 10 universities worldwide did not change, the relative rankings did change with four universities enhancing their ranking between 2024 and 2025 (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from 3rd to 2nd, Harvard University from 4th to 3rd, Princeton University from 6th to 4th and the University of California at Berkeley from 9th to 8th, four maintained their ranking namely the University of Oxford (1st), the University of Cambridge (5th), California Institute of Technology (7th) and Yale University (10th), while two universities were ranked lower (Stanford University from 2nd to 6th and Imperial College London from 8th to 9th.

- Among the universities ranked between positions 11 and 20, three universities improved their position (Peking University from 14th to 13th, the University of Pennsylvania (from 16th to joint 14 and the National University of Singapore from 19th to 17th), four maintained their ranking namely ETH Zurich (11th), Tsinghua University (12th), the University of California Los Angeles (18) and Cornell University (20), while three universities were ranked lower, the

University of Chicago from 13th to joint 14th, Johns Hopkins University from 15th to 16th and Columbia University from 17th to joint 18th.

- The country with the most universities in the top 200 was again the USA, with 55 of which 38 were in the top 100 and 23 in the top 50.
- China is edging closer to the top 10, further boosting its global research influence.
- The reputation of universities from the United Kingdom has declined for the second year as the sector faces a severe financial crisis and experienced the largest year-on-year decline in research reputation among countries with at least 50 ranked institutions.
- The global reputation of US universities is also at a record low with the steepest long-term decline of any country.
- The top five Australian universities slipped down the rankings due to declining reputation and international outlook.
- Highlighting the rise of emerging nations in higher education, the top 200 universities included three new countries joining the top 200 for the first time: Brazil, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

(b)   **South African universities**

A summary of the performance of the South African universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) 2025 is presented in Table 8 below, showing the 2024 and 2025 worldwide rank, 2024 and 2025 South African rank, university, overall score in 2025 and score per pillar in 2025.

Table 8: Summary of the performance of South African universities in THE WUR 2025 results

Worldwide rank 2025 (n=2 092)	Worldwide rank 2024 (n=1 907)	Country rank 2025 (n=14)	Country rank 2024 (n=12)	University	Overall score	Teaching score	Research environment score	Research quality score	Industry score	International outlook
180=	167	1	1	University of Cape Town	59,7	37,8	45,3	86,6	80,6	82,4
301–350	301–350	2	2	University of the Witwatersrand	52,6	32,8	42,8	71,0	89,3	75,4
301–350	301–350	3	3	Stellenbosch University	51,3	31,2	40,1	74,6	89,5	59,6
401–500	401–500	4	4	University of Johannesburg	48,6	28,4	36,9	67,6	77,3	82,3
501–600	501–600	5	5	University of KwaZulu-Natal	45,2	32,2	37,1	62,8	46,0	56,5
601–800	501–600	6	6	University of Pretoria	42,8	29,8	34,3	56,4	64,1	61,7
601–800	601–800	7	8	University of the Western Cape	39,2	23,8	24,8	63,9	23,6	65,1
801–1000	601–800	8	7	North-West University	37,7	21,2	19,9	64,9	48,3	57,5
1001–1200	801–1000	9	9	University of the Free State	32,2	21,7	20,0	49,3	34,3	51,4
1201–1500	Reporter	10	Reporter	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	29,3	25,4	10,6	48,1	18,3	47,5
1201–1500	1001–1200	11	10	University of South Africa	29,1	22,5	13,8	48,1	25,3	39,9
1201–1500	1001–1200	12	11	Durban University of Technology	26,1	19,4	13,4	40,5	20,3	46,7
1501+	Not submitted	13	Not submitted	University of Fort Hare	23,8	20,2	14,3	31,0	20,1	47,4
1501+	1201–1500	14	12	University of Venda	23,2	20,4	26,0	18,1	17,6	46,6

***Notes**:*

1. Under the shaded area at the worldwide rank 2025 and the country rank, the orange indicates a decline in the worldwide band or country band, and the bright green indicates an increase in the worldwide ranking band or country rank.

2. The shaded part on the right indicates the quartile of the score, dark green indicates the upper quartile, light green indicates the upper half between the median and the 75th percentile, light amber indicates the lower half between the median and the 25th percentile and dark amber indicate lower bottom half between the 25th percentile and the lowest score.

Key highlights from South African Universities in THE WUR 2025:

- The number of South African universities in the ranking increased from 12 to 14, with two new entrants joining the ranking, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (reporter status in 2024) and the University of Fort Hare (not submitting information before).

- The scores of the first eight positions were in the top half worldwide.

- There were no changes among the top six universities and position 9, but positions 7 and 8 swopped around, with the University of the Western Cape replacing North-West University in position 7. However, from position 10 onwards, positions changed due to a new entrant from reporter status and another that did not submit in 2024.

- The leading South African university was once again the University of Cape Town, with a decrease in ranking position from 167th to joint 180th, based on a marginal decrease in their overall score from 60,9 to 59,7, despite an increase in the industry pillar, mainly because of declines in the research environment and research quality pillars.

- Apart from the two new entrants, four universities improved their scores (the University of the Western Cape by 2,2, the University of Johannesburg by 1,8, the University of KwaZulu-Natal by 0,9 and North West University also by 0,2, while eight had lower scores (some marginally lower), the University of the Witwatersrand (-0,3), the University of Pretoria (-0,7), the University of Cape Town (-1,2), Stellenbosch University (-1,3), the University of Venda (-1,6), the University of the Free State (-1,7), **Unisa (-3,1)**, Durban University of Technology (-5,3).

- Apart from the two new entrants, this resulted in a drop in worldwide ranking for all the South African universities previously ranked, although the University of the Western Cape improved its national position from 8th to 7th, while North-West University's national position dropped from 7th to 8th, **Unisa from 10th to 11th**, Durban University of Technology from 11th to 12th and the University of Venda from 12th to 14th.

(c)   ODeL universities

A summary of the performance of the ODeL universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025 is presented in Table 9 below, showing the 2024 and 2025 worldwide rank, 2024 and 2025 ODeL rank, university, country, overall score in 2025 and score per pillar in 2025.

Table 9: Summary of the performance of ODeL universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025

Worldwide rank 2025 (n=2 092)	Worldwide rank 2024 (n=1 907)	ODeL rank 2025 (n=7)	ODeL rank 2024 (n=6)	University	Country	Overall score	Teaching score	Research environment score	Research quality score	Industry score	International outlook score
601–800	601–800	1	1	Open University of Catalonia	Spain	38,2–43,2	18,2	19,6	75,1	26,2	51,0
801–1000	601–800	2	2	The Open University	United Kingdom	34,5–38,1	17,0	15,2	67,5	48,4	63,3
1001–1200	1201–1500	3	5	Anadolu University	Turkey	30,7–34,4	26,1	11,0	60,0	20,6	33,1
1201–1500	Reporter	4	Reporter	Ho Chi Minh City Open University	Vietnam	25,2–30,6	9,9	10,3	66,0	15,9	43,4
1201–1500	1001–1200	5	3	University of South Africa	South Africa	29,1	22,5	13,8	48,1	25,3	39,9
1201–1500	1201–1500	6	4	National University of Distance Education (UNED)	Spain	25,2–30,6	18,3	19,5	39,5	43,6	31,4
1501+	1501+	7	6	Hellenic Open University	Greece	10,5–25,1	22,5	8,6	42,5	16,6	26,5

Notes:

1. Under the shaded area at the worldwide rank 2025 and the ODeL rank, the orange indicates a decline in the worldwide band or country band, and the bright green indicates an increase in the worldwide ranking band or ODeL rank.

2. The shaded part on the right indicates the quartile of the score, dark green indicates the upper quartile, light green indicates the upper half between the median and the 75th

percentile, light amber indicates the lower half between the median and the 25th percentile and the dark amber indicate lower bottom half between the 25th percentile and the lowest score.

Key insights regarding the ODeL universities in THE WUR 2025:

- The number of ODeL universities in the ranking increased from six to seven, with Ho Chi Minh City Open University, previously a Reporter, also included in the 2025 rankings.

- Apart from the ODeL universities included in the ranking, a further three universities submitted data and therefore achieved Reporter status: the Arab Open University, Universidad Estatal a Distancia (Reporter for the first time) and Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), while the Open Christian University did not submit data and therefore lost their Reporter status.

- Apart from the new entrant, two ODeL universities improved their overall score, Anadolu University (6,5) and Hellenic Open University (2,6), three universities reported declining overall scores, National University of Distance Education (-0.9), the Open University UK (-1,0) and Unisa (-3,1), while the Open University of Catalonia maintained their score with an increase in their research environment pillar (1,4) but decreases in their teaching pillar (-0,2), research quality pillar (-0,8) and industry pillar (-3,5) while their international outlook remained unchanged.

- The leading ODeL university was again the Open University of Catalonia, with the Open University UK also in the 601-800 band.

- Apart from the new entrant, this led to an improvement of their worldwide rank from the 1201-1500 band to the 1001-1500 band for Anadolu University, while the Open University UK dropped from the 6012-800 band to the 801-1000 band and Unisa dropped from the 1001-1200 band to the 1201-1500 band, while to other ODeL universities maintained their worldwide bands.

- Anadolu University also improved its ODeL rank from 5th to 3rd. The Open University Catalonia and the Open University UK maintained their top two positions, but with the entry of Ho Chi Minh City Open University, the other ODeL universities dropped in their ODeL ranking, **Unisa from 3rd to 5th**, the National University of Distance Education from 4th to 6th, and Hellenic Open University from 6th to 7th.

(d)   Key highlights from other African universities

- One university was in the 401-500 band, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (Morocco).

- One more university was in the 501-600 band, Egypt-Japan University for Science and Technology (Egypt).

- Four universities were in the 601-800 band, the American University in Cairo (Egypt), Future University in Egypt (Egypt), Kafrelsheikh University (Egypt) and Mansoura University (Egypt).

- Five universities were in the 801-1000 band, Al Azhar University (Egypt), Cairo University (Egypt), Covenant University (Nigeria), the University of Cape Coast (Ghana) and the University of Tunis El Manar (Tunisia).

- Twenty universities were in the 1001-1200 band, thirty universities in the 1201-1500 band and six universities in the 1501+ band.

(e)   Key highlights from Unisa

- In all five pillars, the scores were in the lower interquartile range worldwide between the median and the 25th percentile.

- The scores for all five pillars declined (in some cases marginally) between 2024 and 2025. The score for the research environment decreased by 5,5 points, research quality by 2,4 points, teaching by 2,2 points, international outlook by 1,5 points and industry by 0,7 points.

- **Unisa's highest-ranked pillar** was research quality (ranked 1 148th), with industry as the lowest-ranked pillar (ranked 1 465th), teaching second (ranked 1 275th), and research environment third (ranked 1 318th).

- For **teaching**, Unisa's score of 22,2 was roughly in the middle between the median of 25,6 and the 25th percentile of 19,2.

- For the **research environment**, Unisa's score of 13,8 was between the median of 17,1 and the 25th percentile of 11,6, slightly more than 3 points below the median.

- For **research quality**, Unisa's score of 48,1 was between the median of 52,3 and the 25th percentile of 30,7, only 4,2 points below the median.

- For **industry**, Unisa's score of 25,3 was between the median of 41,7 and the 25th percentile of 23,0, only 2,3 points above the 25th percentile.

- For **international outlook**, Unisa's score of 39,9 was between the median of 45,3 and the 25th percentile of 32,0, slightly above the middle.

2.2.1.3 Clarivate Analytics Global Institutional Profiles project and rankings that use this information

Clarivate does not provide a global ranking but produces the Global Institutional Profiles (GIP), which profile universities using areas and metrics typically used in global rankings. The GIP is a useful benchmark for universities on its own. In addition, global rankings are then produced using the GIP by for example, the US News for US News Best Global Universities and Round University Ranking (RUR).

2.2.1.4 Round University Ranking (RUR) 2024 Results

- With the Round University Ranking (RUR), worldwide 1 169 universities were ranked. Unisa was ranked jointly 683rd.

- A total of 45 African universities were ranked, seven from South Africa and two were ODeL universities. **Unisa was ranked 11th in Africa and 1st among the ODeL universities**.

- Seven South African universities were ranked, with **Unisa in position 7 nationally**. These were the *University of Cape Town* (176th), the *University of the Witwatersrand* (396th), the *University of KwaZulu-Natal* (jointly 442nd), *Stellenbosch University* (jointly 458th), the *University of Johannesburg* (490th), and the *University of Pretoria* (jointly 503rd), *and* **Unisa** (jointly 683rd), **Arab Open University** (1 022nd).

2.2.1.5 US News Best Global Universities 2024-2025 results

- In terms of the US News Best Global Universities, overall, 2 459 universities were evaluated, and the 2 250 top universities from more than 100 countries were included in the 2024 ranking.

- The ranking included 92 benchmark universities, which included 4 ODeL universities (including Unisa) and 89 African universities, of which 15 were from South Africa.

- **Unisa** was jointly ranked **861st worldwide, 37th among the benchmark universities and 9th nationally**. Over time, Unisa's score, and ranking changed from a score of

42,9 in 2022, resulting in a worldwide ranking of a joint 718th and a national rank of 9th to a score of 42,5 with a worldwide ranking of joint 821st and national 9th.

- In comparison, the performance of the other ODeL universities was below that of Unisa, with the Open University UK (worldwide jointly 888th and benchmark 39th), Anadolu University (jointly 1 581st worldwide, benchmark 77th) and Universidad Nacional de Education Distancia (worldwide jointly 1 725th, benchmark 82nd).

- **Unisa achieved 793rd** position for global research reputation and 23rd for regional research reputation, 880th for publications, 192nd for books, 726th for conferences, 1568th for normalised citation impact, 978th for total citations, 992nd for publications among the top 10% most cited, 1 539th for percentage publications among the top 10% most cited, 1 712th for international collaboration relative to the country, 879th for international collaboration, 1 080th for papers among the top 1% most cited and 1 513th for percentage papers among the top 1 000 most cited.

2.2.1.6 *Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR)*

The Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR) publishes only academic rankings of global universities. Although the CWUR mainly focus on Research (40%), it also includes a ranking for Education (25%), Employability (25%) and Faculty (10%). The CWUR uses seven objective and robust performance indicators grouped into the four areas ranked. Education is based on the academic success of a university's alumni, measured relative to the university's size. Employability is based on the professional success of a university's alumni, measured relative to the university's size. Faculty measure is based on the number of faculty members who have received top academic distinctions. Research is based on the research output measured by the total number of research articles (10%), high-quality publications as measured by the number of research articles appearing in top-tier journals (10%), influence as measured by the number of research articles appearing in highly influential journals (10%) and citations as measured by the number of highly cited research articles (10%).

For the 2024 edition, 20 966 institutions were evaluated, of which those ranked in the top 2 000 were published in the Global 2 000 list, and 66 were benchmark universities (African and ODeL universities). However, this report only focuses on the performance of the 17 South African and ODeL universities (13 from SA and 5 ODeL, of which Unisa is in both categories), as summarised in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Performance of South African and ODeL universities in the CWUR 2024 ranking

Worldwide rank (Top 2 000 of 20 966)	Position	Institution	Location	Overall score	Africa rank (n=62)	SA rank (n=13)	Education rank	Employ-ability rank	Faculty rank	Research rank
269=	*Top 1,3%*	*University of Cape Town*	*South Africa*	*77,4*	*1*	*1*	*175*	*218*	*-*	*248*
286=	*Top 1,4%*	*University of the Witwatersrand*	*South Africa*	*77,1*	*2*	*2*	*205*	*96*	*-*	*339*
437=	*Top 2,1%*	*Stellenbosch University*	*South Africa*	*75,0*	*3*	*3*	*-*	*234*	*-*	*447*
482=	*Top 2,4%*	*University of KwaZulu-Natal*	*South Africa*	*74,5*	*4*	*4*	*505*	*354*	*-*	*468*
530=	*Top 2,6%*	*University of Pretoria*	*South Africa*	*74,0*	*6*	*5*	*-*	*703*	*-*	*511*
616=	*Top 3%*	*University of Johannesburg*	*South Africa*	*73,2*	*7*	*6*	*-*	*1 076*	*-*	*588*
866=	*Top 4,2%*	*North-West University*	*South Africa*	*71,3*	*10=*	*7*	*-*	*1 682*	*-*	*825*
866=	**Top 4,2%**	**Open University, UK**	**United Kingdom**	**71,3**			**-**	**1 710**	**-**	**837**
1 117=	*Top 5,4%*	*University of the Free State*	*South Africa*	*69,8*	*19=*	*8*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*1 076*
1 154=	*Top 5,6%*	*University of Western Cape*	*South Africa*	*69,6*	*22*	*9*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*1 102*
1 293=	***Top 6,2%***	***University of South Africa***	***South Africa***	***68,9***	***26***	***10***	***-***	***945***	***-***	***1 250***
1 314=	**Top 6,3%**	**National University of Distance Education**	**Spain**	**68,8**			**-**	**1 456**	**-**	**1 265**
1 314=	*Top 6,4%*	*Rhodes University*	*South Africa*	*68,8*	*27=*	*11*	*372*	*805*	*-*	*1 284*
1 561=	**Top 7,6%**	**Open University of Catalonia**	**Spain**	**67,7**			**-**	**1 701**	**212**	**-**
1 685=	*Top 8,2%*	*Nelson Mandela University*	*South Africa*	*67,2*	*46=*	*12*	*-*	*1 379*	*-*	*1 631*
1 898=	**Top 9,1%**	**Anadolu University**	**Turkey**	**66,4**			**-**	**-**	**-**	**1 825**
1 954=	*Top 9,4%*	*Tshwane University of Technology*	*South Africa*	*66,2*	*60=*	*13*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*1 882*

Key insights on the performance of Unisa benchmark universities in CWUR 2024:

- The 17 South African and ODeL universities included in the top 2 000 universities of the 20 966 universities evaluated all performed excellently worldwide, with the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand in the top 1-2%, Stellenbosch University, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg in the top 2-3%, the Open University UK in the top 3-4%, North-West University in the top 4-5%, the University of the Free State and the University of the Western Cape in the top 5-6%, Rhodes University, National University of Distance Education and **Unisa in the top 6-7%**, Open University of Catalonia in the top 7-8% and Nelson Mandela University and Anadolu University in the top 8-9%.

- The top 2 000 included 13 South African universities (worldwide position in brackets): the University of Cape Town (joint 269, top 1,3% worldwide), the University of the Witwatersrand (joint 286, top 1,4%), Stellenbosch University (joint 437, top 2,1%), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (joint 482, top 2,4%), the University of Pretoria (joint 530, top 2,6%), the University of Johannesburg (joint 616, top 3%), North-West University (joint 866, top 4,2%), the University of the Free State (joint 1 117, top 5,4%), the University of the Western Cape (joint 1,154, top 5,6%), **Unisa (joint 1 293, top 6,2%)**, Rhodes University (joint 1 314, top 6,4%), Nelson Mandela University (joint 1 685, top 8,2%) and Tshwane University of Technology (joint 1 954, top 9,4%).

- Five ODeL universities were included in the top 2,000 universities, the Open University UK (joint 866, top 4,2%), **Unisa (joint 1 293, top 6,2%)**, the National University of

Distance Education, Spain (joint 1 314, top 6,3%), Open University of Catalonia, Spain (joint 1 561, top 7,6%) and Anadolu University, Turkey (joint 1 898, top 9,1%).

- **Over time**, Unisa's overall score changed from 68,6, 9th nationally in 2022, 68,6 (top 6,6% worldwide) and 11th nationally in 2023 and improved to 68,9 in 2024 (top 6,2% worldwide) and 10th nationally. It needs to be considered that the number of universities ranked changed from 19 788 in 2022 to 20 531 in 2023, and 20 966 in 2024, although only the top 2 000 universities are published.

- Only the Open University of Catalonia (212) achieved a ranking in the global top 2 000 for **Faculty**, an excellent performance.

- Four universities achieved a ranking in the global top 2,000 for Education: the University of Cape Town (175), the University of the Witwatersrand (205), Rhodes University (372) and the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal (505).

- Thirteen of the sixteen universities were ranked in the global top 2,000 for **Employability** (global position indicated in brackets), the University of the Witwatersrand (96), the University of Cape Town (218), Stellenbosch University (234), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (354), the University of Pretoria (703), Rhodes University (805), **Unisa (945)**, the University of Johannesburg (1 076), Nelson Mandela University (1 379), National University of Distance Education (1 456), North-West University (1 682), Open University of Catalonia (1 701) and Open University UK (1 710).

- For **Research**, sixteen universities were ranked in the global top 2 000 (only the Open University of Catalonia was not in the top 2 000), the University of Cape Town (248), the University of the Witwatersrand (339), Stellenbosch University (447), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (468), the University of Pretoria (511), the University of Johannesburg (588), North-West University (825), Open University UK (837), the University of the Free State (1 076), the University of the Western Cape (1 102), Rhodes University (1 284), **Unisa (1 250)**, National University of Distance Education (1 265), Nelson Mandela University (1 631) and Anadolu University (1 825).

- **Unisa** performed well to be **among the top 6,2% of universities worldwide in the CWUR** and was also **among the top 1 000 for Employability** and **top 2 000 for Research.**

- When compared with the results per performance area in previous years, Unisa's **Employability ranking** improved from 950 in 2022 to 945 in 2023 and 2024 and the

Research ranking from 1 249 in 2022 to 1 291 in 2023 and 1 250 in 2024, therefore roughly level.

2.2.1.7 Ranking Web of Universities (Webometrics)

The primary objective of the Ranking Web of Universities (Webometrics) ranking system is to promote open access to the knowledge generated by universities and, therefore, use data from open sources. Although largely focused on research, the Webometrics ranking system also indirectly measures the teaching mission using web presence to indicate the scholars' commitment to their students. The three areas ranked are visibility (50%), excellence (40%) and transparency (10%).

Key highlights from the Webometrics 2024 version 2 ranking were:

- A total of 32 142 institutions were included in the ranking, of which 2 087 were from Africa. This included 124 South African institutions, one more than in 2023.

- Twelve African universities were among the top 1 000 worldwide, of which eight were South African universities, an excellent achievement (South African universities indicated in italics). The *University of Cape Town* (world rank 255) ranked highest among the African institutions, followed by the *University of the Witwatersrand* (world rank 391), *Stellenbosch University* and the *University of Pretoria* (jointly world rank 431), Cairo University (world rank 529), the *University of KwaZulu-Natal* (world rank 580), the *University of Johannesburg* (world rank 555), Alexandria University (world rank 677), *Unisa* (world rank 736), Mansoura University (world rank 861) and the *University of the Western Cape* (906) and Ain Shams University 908). Apart from the eight South African universities in the top 1,000 worldwide, the two other top 10 positions for South Africa included the University of the *Free State* (world rank 1 100) and *Rhodes University* (1 115). **Unisa did well to be among the top 2,3% of institutions worldwide (736 out of 32 142)**.

- The African universities included 17 ODeL universities, with **Unisa leading**, followed by the National Open University of Nigeria (world rank joint 4 838), Open University of Tanzania (world rank 5 045), International Open University (world rank 8 055), Zimbabwe Open University (world rank 8 312), Arab Open University Egypt (world rank joint 10 262), Université Virtuelle de Côte d'Ivoire (world rank 11 171), Université

Virtuelle de Tunis (world rank 12 423), Zambian Open University (world rank 13 311), and Open University of Mauritius (world rank 15 563), Ahmadu Bello University Distance Learning Centre (world rank jointly 17 115), and Laweh Laweh Open University Ghana (world rank jointly 19 718) among the top ODeL universities in Africa.

- The **Open University UK (world rank 17) was the leader among 56 ODeL universities included in the ranking**, followed by Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (world rank 697), *Unisa* (world rank 736), Open University Netherlands (world rank 1 201), the University of Anatolia / Anadolu Üniversitesi (world rank 1 296), Hellenic Open University (world rank 1 784), Allama Iqbal Open University (world rank 1 953), Open University of Israel (world rank 2 195), Ho Chi Minh City Open University (world rank 2 842), and Open University of Cyprus (world rank 3 314). **Unisa did well to be third among the ODeL universities worldwide.**

- The top 30 South African institutions included all 26 public universities and four private institutions, IIE MSA (Monash South Africa), the South African College of Applied Psychology, Boston City Campus and Business College and Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA). Most of the remaining institutions were TVET colleges and private colleges, except for STADIO Higher Education (world rank 695) and IIE Rosebank College Varsity College (world rank 697).

Regarding the three areas ranked, **Unisa also performed excellently in all three, being ranked 770th worldwide for Excellence** (top 2,4%), 970th for Openness (top 3,0%) and 1 110th for Impact (top 3,5%).

2.2.1.8 SCImago Institutions Rankings (SIR)

The SCImago Institutions Rankings (SIR) is a classification of academic and research-related institutions ranked by a composite indicator that combines three different sets of indicators based on research performance, innovation outputs and societal impact measured by their web visibility. The three factors are Research (50%), Innovation (30%) and Societal impact (20%).

Overall, 9 054 institutions were included in the SCImago 2024 ranking, of which 4 762 were universities, including 281 African universities.

The **overall performance** of South African and ODeL universities in the SCImago ranking is provided in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Overall performance of South African and ODeL universities in Scimago ranking 2024

Worldwide Global rank Overall (n=9 054)	Worldwide Universities rank Overall (n=4 762)	Benchmark rank Overall (n=294)	Africa rank Overall (n=283)	South African rank Overall (n=23)	ODeL rank Overall (n=13)	Institution	Country
838	364	1	1	1		*University of Cape Town*	*South Africa*
1 247	536	3	3	2		*University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*	*South Africa*
1 295=	556=	4	4	3		*Stellenbosch University*	*South Africa*
1 297	558	5	5	4		*University of Pretoria*	*South Africa*
1 354	577	6	6	5		*University of KwaZulu-Natal **	*South Africa*
1 699	694	7	7	6		*University of Johannesburg*	*South Africa*
1 743=	**715=**	**8**			**1**	**The Open University**	**United Kingdom**
2 189	**865**	**11**			**2**	**Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia ***	**Spain**
2 201=	867=	12	10	7		*North-West University*	*South Africa*
2 779	***1 080***	***15***	***13***	***8***	***3***	***University of South Africa***	***South Africa***
3 452	**1 357**	**18**			**4**	**Anadolu University**	**Turkey**
3 498=	1 382=	19	16	9		*University of the Western Cape*	*South Africa*
3 882=	**1 560=**	**27**			**5**	**Allama Iqbal Open University**	**Pakistan**
4 236	1 720	33	29	10		*University of the Free State*	*South Africa*
4 691	1 941	40	36	11		*Tshwane University of Technology*	*South Africa*
4 746=	**1 967=**	**43**			**6**	**Open University of Israel**	**Israel**
4 865	2 031	45	40	12		*University of Fort Hare*	*South Africa*
5 258=	2 255=	58=	53=	13		*Rhodes University*	*South Africa*
5 510=	**2 402=**	**64**			**7**	**Open University Netherlands**	**Netherlands (the)**
5 678=	**2 511=**	**68**			**8**	**Ho Chi Minh City Open University**	**Viet Nam**
5 769	2 564	71	64	14		*Durban University of Technology*	*South Africa*
5 959=	2 680=	78	71	15		*University of Venda*	*South Africa*
5 969=	2 686=	79	72	16		*Walter Sisulu University*	*South Africa*
5 994=	2 700=	81	74	17		*Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University*	*South Africa*
6 246=	2 871=	91	84	18		*Cape Peninsula University of Technology*	*South Africa*
6 884=	3 302=	119	112	19		*University of Limpopo*	*South Africa*
7 065=	3 429=	125	118	20		*Central University of Technology, Free State*	*South Africa*
7 105=	3 455=	127=	120=	21		*University of Zululand*	*South Africa*
7 294=	3 583=	142	135	22		*Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University*	*South Africa*
7 421=	**3 663=**	**154**	**147**		**9**	**National Open University of Nigeria**	**Nigeria**
7 729=	**3 898=**	**182**			**10**	**Hellenic Open University**	**Greece**
7 811=	3 955=	186	178	23		*Vaal University of Technology*	*South Africa*
8 052	**4 128**	**203**			**11**	**Open University of Cyprus**	**Cyprus**
8 843	**4 660**	**278**			**12**	**Arab Open University ***	**Multintional**
9 046	**4 760**	**294**			**13**	**Arab Open University, Palestine**	**Palestine, State of**

Key results from Unisa benchmark universities in SCImago 2024 were:

- A total of 13 ODeL universities were included in the ranking. The Open University UK was the leading ODeL university (715th among 4 762 universities worldwide), followed by Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (865th worldwide), Unisa (1 080th worldwide), Anadolu University (1 357th worldwide), Allama Iqbal Open University (1 560th worldwide), Open University of Israel (1 967th worldwide), Open University Netherlands (2 402nd   worldwide), Ho Chi Minh City Open University (2 511th worldwide), National Open University of Nigeria (3 663rd worldwide), Hellenic Open

University (3 898th worldwide), Open University of Cyprus (4 128th worldwide), Arab Open University (4 660th worldwide) and Arab Open University Palestine (4 760th worldwide).

- The University of Cape Town (364th among 4 762 universities worldwide) was ranked highest among the 23 South African universities included in the ranking, followed by the University of the Witwatersrand (536th worldwide), Stellenbosch University (556th worldwide), the University of Pretoria (558th worldwide), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (577th worldwide), the University of Johannesburg (694th worldwide), North-West University (867th worldwide), Unisa (1 080th worldwide), the University of the Western Cape (1 382nd worldwide), and the University of the Free State (1 720th worldwide) among the top 10 institutions in South Africa.

- Over time, **Unisa's position dropped from 3 689th worldwide** and **8th nationally in 2022** to **4 394th worldwide** and **9 nationally in 2023** and improved **to 2 779 worldwide and 8 nationally in 2024**.

The performance of South African and ODeL universities **per performance area** is provided in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Performance of South African and ODeL universities per performance area in SCImago 2024 ranking.

Institution	Country	Worldwide Universities Research rank (n=4 762)	Africa Research rank (n=283)	SA Research rank (n=23)	Worldwide Universities Innovation rank (n=4 762)	Africa Innovation rank (n=283)	SA Innovation rank (n=23)	Worldwide Universities Societal rank (n=4 762)	Africa Societal rank (n=283)	SA Societal rank (n=23)
University of Cape Town	South Africa	812	2	1	2 066	31	1	204	1	1
University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa	1 150	4	3	2 329=	117=	10	318	2	2
Stellenbosch University	South Africa	1 146	3	2	2 416	56	3	444=	5=	4=
University of Pretoria	South Africa	1 450	6	5	2 421	57	4	365	3	3
University of KwaZulu-Natal *	South Africa	1 408	5	4	2 218	42	2	444=	5=	4=
University of Johannesburg	South Africa	1 708	7	6	3 180	114	9	463	7	6
The Open University UK	**United Kingdom**	1 366			2 891			676		
Universidad Nacional de Education a Distancia *	**Spain**	1 199			3 715			1 061		
North-West University	South Africa	2 361	14	7	3 012	101=	8	702	9	8
University of South Africa	*South Africa*	*3 791*	*41*	*9*	*3 917*	*193*	*17*	*544*	*8*	*7*
Anadolu University	**Turkey**	6 570			2 443			719		
University of the Western Cape	South Africa	3 679	36	8	2 933	93	7	1 408	16	11
Allama Iqbal Open University	**Pakistan**	6 099			2 007			1 386		
University of the Free State	South Africa	4 047	52	10	4 206	235	20	1 299	13	9
Tshwane University of Technology	South Africa	6 929=	161=	20	2 689	77	6	1 311	14	10
Open University of Israel	**Israel**	7 028			1 312			1 604		
University of Fort Hare	South Africa	4 985	68	11	2 507	63	5	3 122=	421=	17=
Rhodes University	South Africa	5 941	113	15	3 635	164=	14	1 753	19	12
Open University Netherlands	**Netherlands**	4 216			3 437			4 315		
Ho Chi Minh City Open University	**Viet Nam**	4 163			3 844			4 162		
Durban University of Technology	South Africa	5 684	98	13	3 584=	154=	12=	2 750	37	15
University of Venda	South Africa	5 475=	88=	12	3 953	199	19	3 890	38	16
Walter Sisulu University	South Africa	5 995	117	16	3 336	124=	11	3 222=	45=	19
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	South Africa	6 695	144	18	3 935	196=	18	1 939	22	13
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	South Africa	5 859=	105=	14	3 903	192	16	3 122=	42=	17=
University of Limpopo	South Africa	6 974	165	21	4 303	245	21	2 543	30	14
Central University of Technology, Free State	South Africa	6 864	157	19	3 775	180=	15	3 853	61	21
University of Zululand	South Africa	7 219=	179=	23	3 584=	154=	12=	3 809=	59=	20
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	South Africa	5 254	128	17	4 381	256	22	4 246	70	23
National Open University of Nigeria	**Nigeria**	7 243	182		4 110	223		3 792	57	
Hellenic Open University	**Greece**	7 296			4 447			3 853		
Vaal University of Technology	South Africa	7 163=	173	22	4 573	269	23	3 921	65	22
Open University of Cyprus	**Cyprus**	6 528			4 475			5 745		
Arab Open University *	**Multinational**	9 008			3 856			5 864		
Arab Open University, Palestine	**Palestine, State of**	9 017			4 340			8 681		

Key results per performance area in SCImago 2024 were:

- South African universities performed well to achieve the top rankings in Africa for societal impact and research, but North African universities, mainly from Egypt, dominated the Innovation rankings in Africa.

- The top ten South African universities in **research** (worldwide rank in brackets) were the University of Cape Town (812), Stellenbosch University (1 146), the University of the Witwatersrand (1 150), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (1 408), the University of Pretoria (1 450), the University of Johannesburg (1 708), North-West University (2 361), the University of the Western Cape (3 679), **Unisa (3 791)** and the University of the Free State (4 047), mainly in the upper half worldwide and the first three in the upper quartile worldwide.

- For **research**, the **top five ODeL universities** (worldwide position in brackets) were Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (1 199), the Open University (1 366), **Unisa (3 791),** Ho Chi Minh City Open University (4 163) and the Open University Netherlands (4 216), with the first two in the upper half worldwide.

- For **innovation**, South African universities did not perform that well. The top ten South African universities were the University of Cape Town (2 066), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2 218), Stellenbosch University (5 312), the University of Pretoria (5 325), the University of Fort Hare (5 471), Tshwane University of Technology (5 758), the University of the Western Cape (6 117), North-West University (jointly 6 247), the University of Johannesburg (6 503) and the University of the Witwatersrand (jointly 6 590), with **Unisa (3 917), ranked 17th out of the 23 South African universities**.

- ODeL universities also did not perform well for innovation. The top five ODeL universities for innovation were the Open University of Israel (1 312), Allama Iqbal Open University (2 007), Anadolu University (2 443), the Open University UK (2 891) and the Open University Netherlands (3 437). After the leaders, Ho Chi Minh City Open University (3 844) and **Unisa (3 917)** followed and then the rest.

- For **societal impact**, **South African universities performed excellent** (worldwide rank in brackets), with the University of Cape Town (204), the University of the Witwatersrand (318), the University of Pretoria (365), the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Stellenbosch University (jointly 444), the University of Johannesburg (463), **Unisa (544)**, North-West University (702), the University of the Free State (1 299) and Tshwane University of Technology (1 311) were the top ten South African universities.

- Interestingly, **ODeL universities** also performed reasonably well for **societal impact**. The top five ODeL universities (worldwide position in brackets) for societal impact were Unisa (544), the Open University UK (676), Anadolu University (719), Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (1 061) and Allama Iqbal Open University (1 386).

2.2.1.9 University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP)

The University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP) focuses on the academic quality of research, including **quantitative and qualitative indicators**. The ranking makes use of bibliometric data sourced from the Web of Science and InCites. It includes scores for six indicators: Articles (21%), Citations (21%), Total documents (10%), Article Impact Total – AIT (18%), Citation Impact Total – CIT (15%) and International collaboration (15%).

Although more universities are ranked, only the top 3,000 universities are published. Thus, URAP covers approximately 12% of all Higher Education Institutions globally, making it one of the most comprehensive ranking systems regarding the number of ranked universities.

The top 3 000 universities included 150 benchmark universities (African universities and ODeL universities), of which 147 were African universities, including 22 from South Africa, and four ODeL universities. **Unisa was eighth** among the 22 SA universities. A summary of the performance of the South African and ODeL universities in the URAP 2023-2024 results is provided in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Performance of South African and ODeL universities in the URAP ranking for 2023-2024

University	Country	Article	Citation	Total documents score	Article impact (AIT) score	Citation impact (CIT) score	Collabo-ration score	Total score	Worldwide rank (Top 3 000)	SA rank (n=22)	ODeL rank (n=4)
University of Cape Town	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*71,42*	*88,75*	*40,72*	*65,47*	*71,32*	*63,18*	*400,85*	*243*	*1*	
University of Witwatersrand	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*69,31*	*80,29*	*40,42*	*62,26*	*65,63*	*56,37*	*374,29*	*340*	*2*	
Stellenbosch University	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*64,97*	*81,87*	*38,25*	*58,77*	*65,92*	*59,59*	*369,38*	*362*	*3*	
University of Kwazulu Natal	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*65,94*	*81,16*	*38,67*	*59,32*	*64,08*	*56,91*	*366,08*	*371*	*4*	
University of Johannesburg	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*68,33*	*74,35*	*37,64*	*58,37*	*57,58*	*47,08*	*343,35*	*467*	*5*	
University of Pretoria	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*64,20*	*74,86*	*38,33*	*58,73*	*57,92*	*47,96*	*342,01*	*475*	*6*	
North West University - South Africa	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*52,52*	*70,15*	*33,09*	*51,77*	*56,72*	*56,10*	*320,36*	*589*	*7*	
University of South Africa	***SOUTH AFRICA***	***45,91***	***59,52***	***31,47***	***45,43***	***45,50***	***39,54***	***267,38***	***970***	***9***	***1***
University of the Western Cape	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*41,51*	*60,95*	*27,55*	*44,37*	*43,59*	*40,37*	*258,32*	*1 048*	*10*	
Rhodes University	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*36,92*	*54,36*	*24,94*	*40,46*	*38,07*	*34,83*	*229,59*	*1 298*	*11*	
Durban University of Technology	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*29,52*	*47,37*	*19,98*	*32,14*	*40,75*	*57,46*	*227,22*	*1 328*	*12*	
Tshwane University of Technology	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*27,42*	*51,52*	*21,98*	*36,52*	*41,75*	*41,42*	*220,61*	*1 392*	*13*	
Nelson Mandela University	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*32,23*	*47,06*	*23,69*	*37,68*	*40,56*	*36,26*	*217,49*	*1 432*	*14*	
Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED)	**SPAIN**	**35,03**	**50,56**	**27,77**	**35,61**	**37,76**	**30,61**	**217,32**	**1 436**		**2**
University of Fort Hare	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*17,04*	*41,42*	*18,23*	*26,02*	*32,80*	*41,12*	*176,62*	*1 952*	*15*	
Anadolu University	**TURKIYE**	**21,53**	**42,99**	**20,63**	**24,81**	**30,97**	**32,79**	**173,72**	**2 000**		**3**
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*26,98*	*33,92*	*17,48*	*30,43*	*24,91*	*24,25*	*157,97*	*2 229*	*16*	
University of Venda	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*18,59*	*34,09*	*16,48*	*26,44*	*29,63*	*31,05*	*156,30*	*2 255*	*17*	
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*22,09*	*33,29*	*17,63*	*26,17*	*25,50*	*23,70*	*148,39*	*2 365*	*18*	
University of Limpopo	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*22,58*	*32,72*	*18,77*	*27,84*	*22,46*	*20,76*	*145,13*	*2 420*	*19*	
Walter Sisulu University	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*13,04*	*29,85*	*12,01*	*20,84*	*24,57*	*30,15*	*130,45*	*2 653*	*20*	
University of Zululand	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*12,48*	*30,16*	*14,76*	*24,62*	*21,40*	*21,81*	*125,22*	*2 735*	*21*	
Vaal University of Technology (VUT)	*SOUTH AFRICA*	*2,83*	*28,57*	*11,06*	*19,59*	*22,69*	*25,16*	*109,90*	*2 938*	*22*	
Ho Chi Minh City Open University	**VIETNAM**	**13,26**	**25,62**	**12,19**	**18,30**	**17,57**	**20,60**	**107,55**	**2 973**		**4**

Notes:

1.) South African universities are indicated in italic font and ODeL universities in bold.

2.) The colour-coding of the performance indicates the quartiles of the scores worldwide, with dark green indicating the upper quartile worldwide. Light green indicates the upper half worldwide but below the 75th percentile, light amber indicates the bottom half worldwide but above the 25th percentile, and dark amber indicates the bottom half worldwide and the lower quartile. The bright green indicates the top 300 (top 10%) of the top 3,000 published universities.

Key observations from the 2024 URAP ranking results for South African and ODeL universities:

- Four ODeL universities were in the top 3,000 universities, namely **Unisa (970th)**, Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (1 436th), Anadolu University (2 000th) and Ho Chi Minh City Open University (2 973rd).

- **Unisa was 9th among the 22 South African universities in the top 3,000 published universities**.

- The South African universities in the upper half worldwide were the University of Cape Town (243rd), the University of the Witwatersrand (340th), Stellenbosch University

(362nd), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (371st), the University of Johannesburg (467th), the University of Pretoria (475th), North West University (589th), the University of the Free State (884th), Unisa (970th), the University of the Western Cape (1 048th), Rhodes University (1 298th), Durban University of Technology (1 328th), Tshwane University of Technology (1 392nd) and Nelson Mandela University (1 432nd).

- Other African universities in the upper quartile worldwide included Cairo University (273rd), Mansoura University (417th), Ain Shams University (459th), Alexandria University (493rd), Zagazig University (528th), Al Azhar University (562nd), Assuit University (585th), Universite de Tunis-El-Manar (625th), Addis Ababa University (678th), Tanta University (701st) and the University of Ibadan (738th).

- In comparison, **Unisa was in position 948 worldwide and 10 nationally in 2021-2022, 932 worldwide and 10 in 2022-2023 to 970 worldwide and 9 nationally in 2023-2024**.

2.2.2 Sustainability Focused Rankings

2.2.2.1 *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (THE IR)*

The Times Higher Education Impact Ranking (THE IR) measure the impact of universities and contributions towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. For this purpose, 220 measurements were developed across four broad areas of research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching to assess universities' performance in the SDGs. To be included in the overall Impact ranking, a university must provide data on SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals and at least three other SDGs, but universities can submit data on as many of the SDGs as they would like or are able to. Therefore, the SDGs supported by a specific university can differ across universities and across regions. This means universities are scored based on a different set of SDGs, depending on their focus. To achieve an equitable dispensation, SDG 17 accounts for 22% of the overall score, while the three best-performing SDGs among the electives carry a weight of 26%; each SDG's score is standardised.

The 2024 results for the THE IR were released at the Global Sustainable Development Congress in Thailand in June 2024, and highlights were:

- A total of 2 152 universities from 125 countries were evaluated, 35,3% up from the 1 591 universities in 2023.

- The number of African universities ranked in the 18 impact tables of the Impact ranking **more than doubled from 106 in 2023 to 230 in 2024**. The growth was led by two countries: Algeria's universities included in the ranking increased from 14 in 2023 to 77 in 2024, and Nigerian universities increased from 11 in 2023 to 27 in 2024.

- Ten South African universities were included in the **overall ranking** (rank/ranking band in brackets): the University of Johannesburg (joint 36), the University of Pretoria (42), the University of Cape Town (joint 77), the University of the Witwatersrand (201-300), the University of the Western Cape (401-600), Nelson Mandela University (601-800), **Unisa** (601-800), Durban University of Technology (1001-1500), Tshwane University of Technology (1001-1500) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (1001-1500). This is an excellent performance with three universities in the top 100 and a further four, **including Unisa, also in the top half worldwide**.

- Nine ODeL universities were included in the overall ranking (ranking band in brackets): Allama Iqbal Open University (301-400), National University of Distance Education (401-600), Unisa (601-800), Arab Open University (1001-1500), Ho Chi Minh City Open University (1 001–1 500), Universidad Estatal a Distancia (1001–1 500), Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (1001–1 500), Anadolu University (1501+) and Hellenic Open University (1501+). The Allama Iqbal Open University and **Unisa performed well to be in the top half worldwide**.

Highlights from Unisa's performance in the Overall ranking and the ranking for the SDGs for which data were submitted, namely SDG 4 Quality education, SDG 5 Gender equality, SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation, SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy, SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 Reduced inequalities, SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 17 Partnership for the goals are discussed below.

Overall Unisa ranking

- Apart from the compulsory SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals, Unisa's three qualifying SDGs were SDG 5, Gender equality; SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions; and SDG 4, Quality education.

- Unisa's overall score for 2024 was 65,3, in the 601-800 band out of 1 963 universities, marginally down from 66,7 in 2023 (in the 601-800 band out of 1 591 universities). Although the score was marginally down, the band was maintained despite an increase in the number of universities ranked. This placed **Unisa in joint 6th position among the South African universities and 3rd among the ODeL universities**.

SDG 4 Quality education

Overall, 1 681 universities were ranked in the SDG 4 Quality education rank.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 4 Quality education and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 9 below.
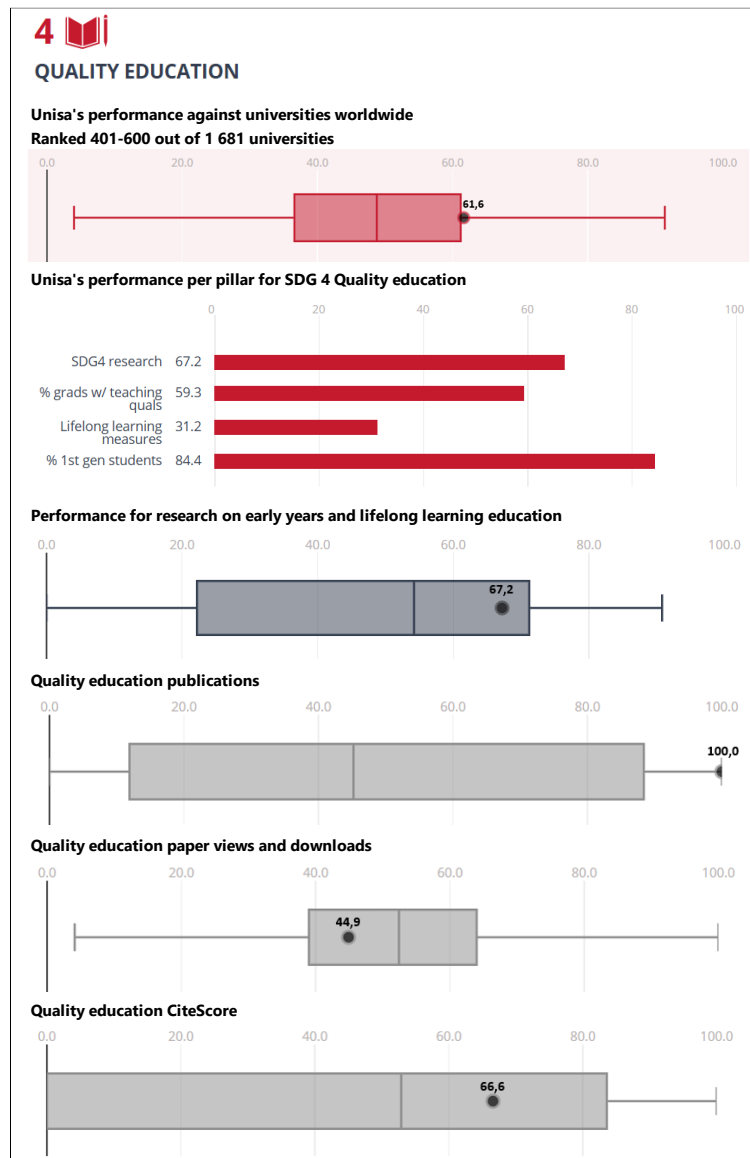
- Unisa's **overall score for Quality education** for 2024 was 61,6, in the **upper quartile worldwide**, placing Unisa in the 401-600 band out of 1 681 universities. Compared to 2023, Unisa achieved an overall score of 64,0 in the 201-300 band out of 1 304 universities in 2023. Despite the marginally lower score in 2024, it resulted in a drop in the band because of the increased number of universities. However, this SDG represented Unisa's third-best performance SDG, compared to being the best SDG in 2023, but was replaced by the new entry SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. **Unisa was 4th among the seven South African universities** ranked for Quality Education.

- Unisa's overall score in the quality education **research pillar** was 67,2, in the **upper half worldwide** and **marginally below the 75th percentile** of 71,2.

- For quality education **publications,** Unisa's score of 100,0 was equal to the top score. This was based on 626 publications compared to the worldwide median of 21, an excellent performance.

- The quality education **paper views and downloads** score of 44,9 places Unisa in the interquartile band's lower half. Overall, **Unisa had 18,039 paper views** and downloads for an average of 28,82 per publication, compared to the worldwide median of 35,61.

- The score for quality education's CiteScore was 66,6, in the upper half of the interquartile band. Unisa's percentage of publications in top journals was 11,0%, exceeding the worldwide median of 8% by three percentage points.

SDG 5 Gender Equality

Overall, 1 361 universities were ranked in the SDG 5 Gender equality ranking.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 5 Gender equality and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 10 below.
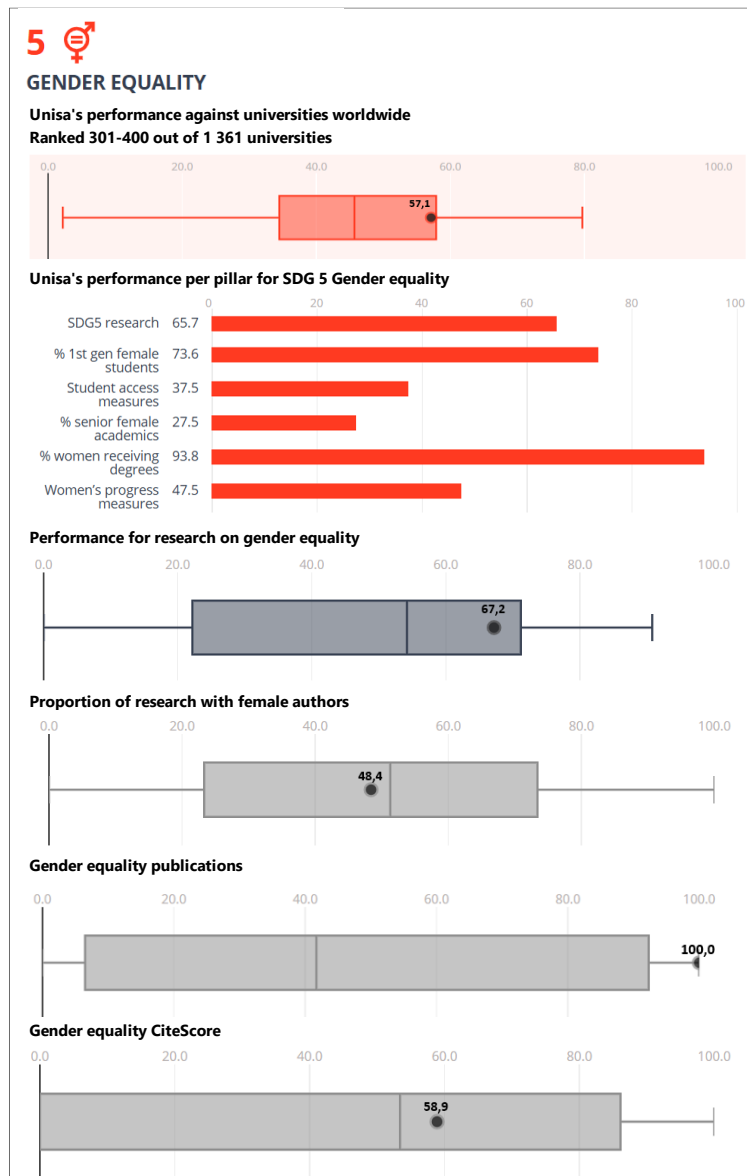
- Unisa's **overall score for SDG 5 Gender equality** in 2024 was 57,1, in the upper half of the interquartile band and marginally below the 75th percentile of 57,9%, placing **Unisa in the 301-400 band out of 1 361 universities**. In comparison, Unisa's overall score for Gender equality in 2023 was 61,9, **placing Unisa in the 101-200 band of 1 081** universities. Despite a drop in score and band, it is still Unisa's best-performing SDG.

- Unisa's overall score for the gender equality **research pillar** was 65,7, in the upper half of the interquartile band worldwide, marginally below the 75th percentile of 71,6.

- Unisa's score for the **proportion of research with female authors** was 48,4, in the lower half of the interquartile band. Unisa's proportion of publications with female authors was 33,0% on par with the worldwide median of 32,7%.

- For **gender publications**, Unisa achieved a score of 100,0, equal to the top score. This was based on 330 publications compared to the worldwide median of 6, an excellent performance.

- The Unisa score for gender equality's **CiteScore** was 58,9 in the upper half of the interquartile band. Unisa's percentage of publications in top journals(11%) exceeded the worldwide median of 8% by three percentage points.

SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation

Overall, 867 universities were ranked for the SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11: Overview of Unisa's performance in SDG 6 and performance in the research pillar in the 2024 impact rankings results
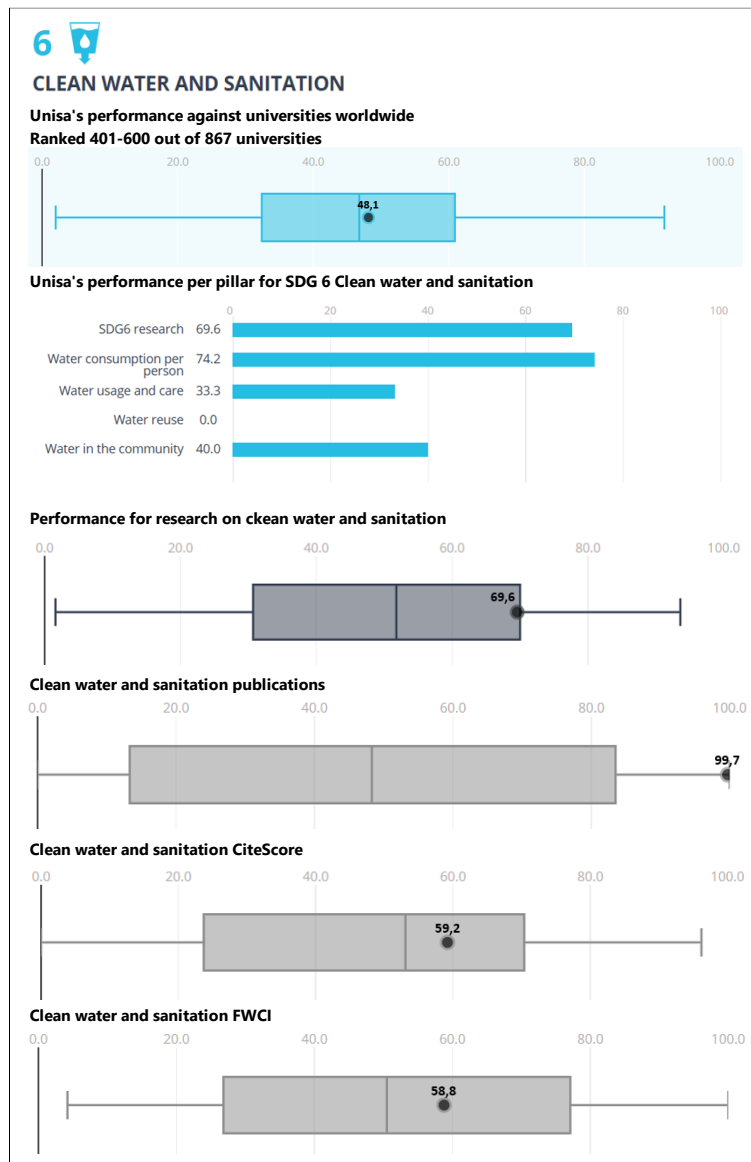
- The **overall score** for SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation in 2024 was 48,1, in the upper half of the interquartile band worldwide, just above the median of 46,8. This placed Unisa in the 401-600 band out of 867 universities. In 2023, Unisa achieved an overall score of 37,1 in 401-600 band out of 702 universities. Unisa's improved score ensured that despite the increase in the number of ranked universities, Unisa is still ranked in the 401-600 band.

- Unisa's overall score for Clean Water and Sanitation's research pillar was 69,6, which is 0,4 points below the median of 70,0, an excellent performance.

- For clean water and sanitation **publications,** Unisa scored 99,7, only 0,3 points below the top score of 100,0. This was based on 542 publications compared to the worldwide median of 27, an outstanding performance.

- The Unisa score for clean water and sanitation's **CiteScore** was 59,2 in the upper half of the interquartile band. Unisa's percentage publications in top journals of 27%, based on 149 publications in top journals, exceeded the worldwide median of 19% by six percentage points.

- Unisa's score for clean water and sanitation's **FWCI** was 58,8 in the upper half of the interquartile band, based on an FWCI of 1,39 compared to the worldwide median FWCI of 1,08, which is an excellent performance.

SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy

Overall, 987 universities were ranked in the SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Overview of Unisa's performance in SDG 7 and performance in the research pillar in the 2024 impact rankings results
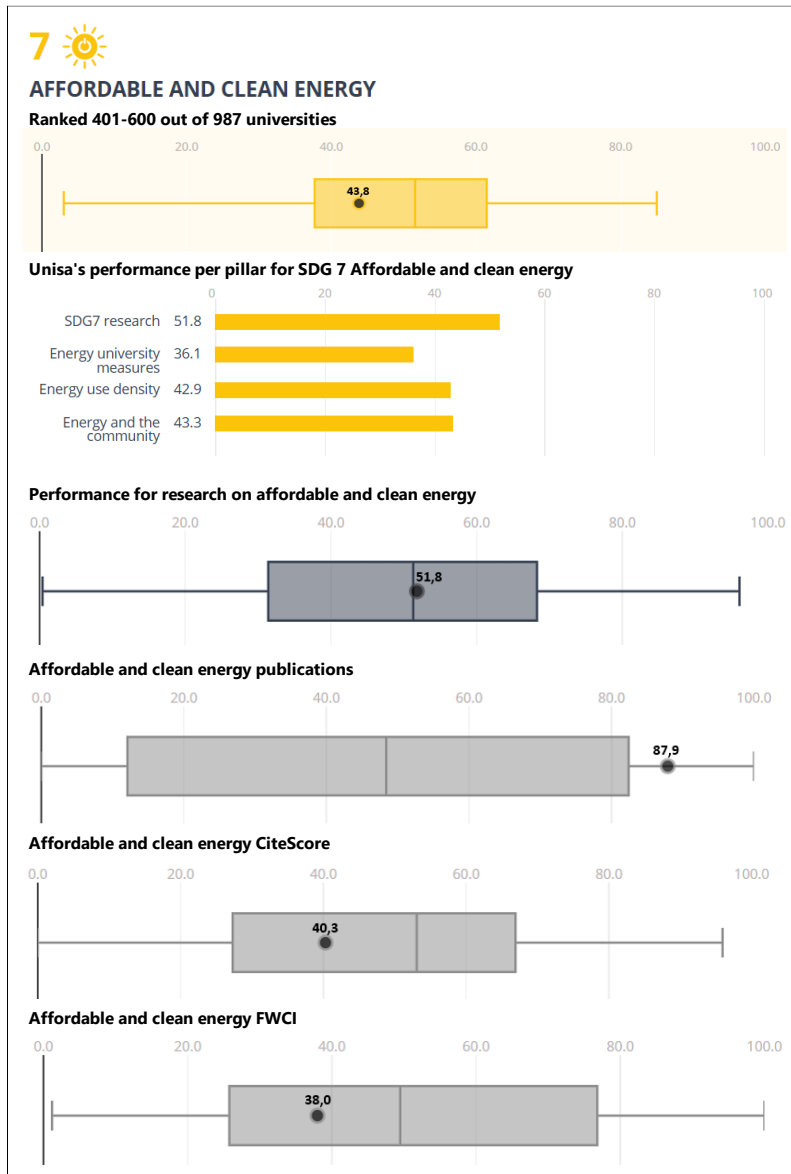
- Unisa's **overall score** for Affordable and clean energy in 2024 was 43,8, in the lower half of the interquartile band, placing Unisa in the 601-800 band out of 987 universities. In comparison, the 2023 score was 45,6, placing Unisa in the 601-800 band out of 812 universities. Despite a two percentage point drop in the score and increased universities ranked in this SDG, Unisa maintained the same band.

- Unisa's overall score for the **research pillar** of Affordable and clean energy was 51,8, which is 0,5 points above the worldwide median of 51,3, a good performance.

- For affordable and clean energy **publications,** Unisa achieved a score of 87,9, in the **upper quartile worldwide**, an exceptional performance. This was based on 459 publications compared to the worldwide median of 68.

- The Unisa score for affordable and clean energy's **CiteScore** was 40,3 in the bottom half of the interquartile band. With 74 publications in top journals, Unisa's percentage of publications in top journals of 16% was four percentage points below the worldwide median of 20%.

- Similarly, Unisa's score for affordable and clean energy's **FWCI** was 38,0, also in the bottom half of the interquartile band, based on an FWCI of 1,07 compared to the worldwide median FWCI of 1,15.

SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth (first time submitted)

A total of 1 149 universities were ranked in SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 13 below.
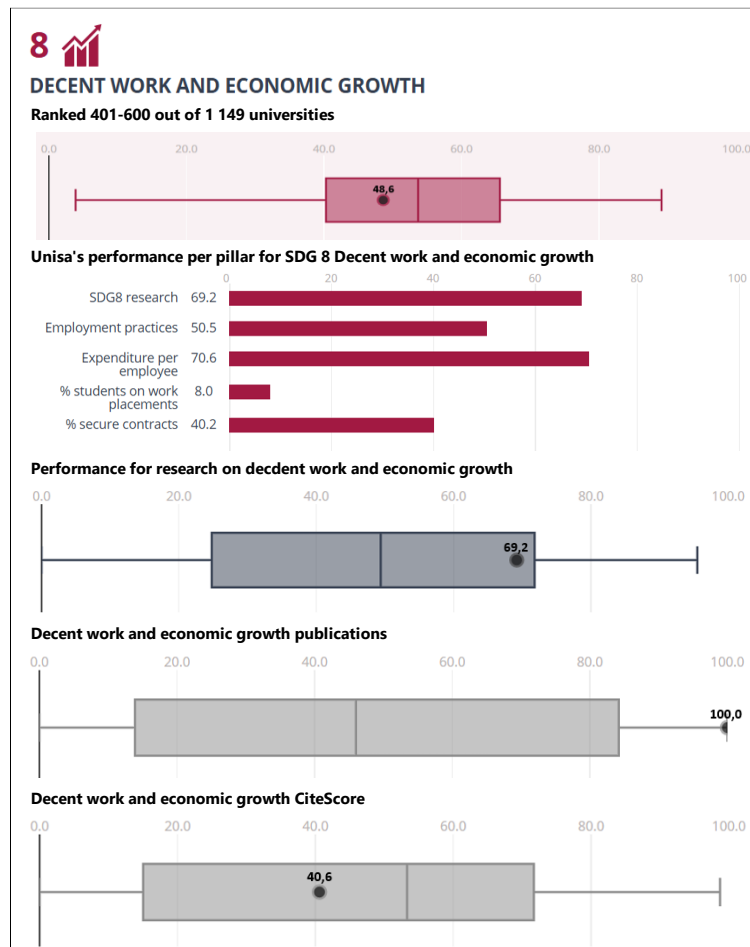
- Unisa's overall score for Decent work and economic growth of 48,6 in 2024, in the lower half of the interquartile band, placed **Unisa in the 401-600 band out of 1 149** universities, a good performance as this is the first time that Unisa was included in the ranking for this SDG because data was not submitted previously.

- Unisa's overall score for the **research pillar** of Decent work and economic growth was 69,2, in the upper half of the interquartile band worldwide, just below the 75th percentile of 71,8.

- For decent work and economic growth **publications**, Unisa achieved a score of 100,0, the same as the top score. This was based on 579 publications compared to the worldwide median of 28, an exceptional performance.

- The Unisa score for decent work and economic growth's **CiteScore** was 40,6 in the bottom half of the interquartile band. With 70 publications in top journals, Unisa's

percentage of publications in top journals of 12% was five percentage points below the worldwide median percentage of 17%.

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

A total of 1 108 universities were ranked in the SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 14**Error! Reference source not found.** below.

Figure 14: Overview of Unisa's performance in SDG 10 and performance in the research pillar in the 2024 impact rankings results
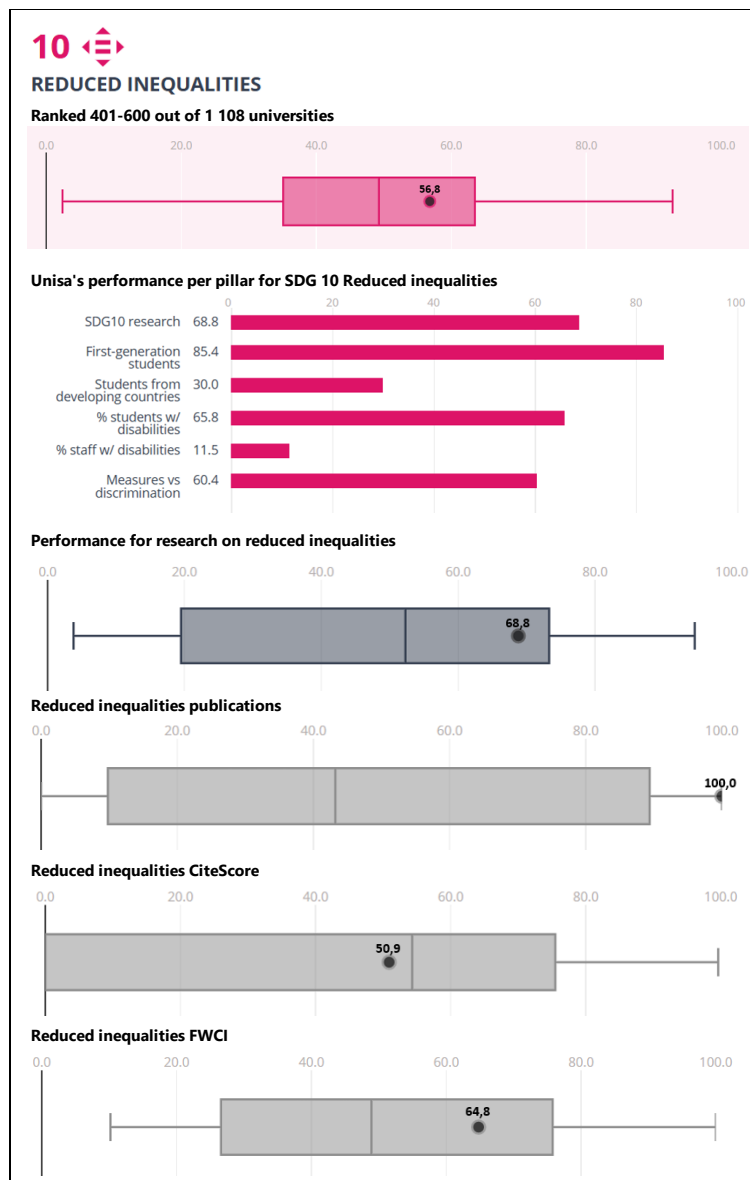
- Unisa's overall score for Reduced inequalities of 56,8 in 2024, in the upper half of the interquartile band, placed **Unisa in the 401-600 band out of 1 108 universities**. With a marginal improvement in Unisa's score and an increase in universities ranked, it is encouraging that Unisa maintained its band.

- Unisa's overall score for the **research pillar** of Reduced inequalities was 68,8, in the upper half of the interquartile band worldwide, close to the 75th percentile of 73,3.

- For reduced inequalities **publications**, Unisa achieved a score of 100,0, the same as the top score. This was based on 523 publications compared to the worldwide median of 13, an exceptional performance.

- The Unisa score for reduced inequalities' **CiteScore** was 50,9, close to the median of 54,3. With 66 publications in top journals, Unisa's percentage of publications in top journals of 13% was on par with the worldwide median percentage of 13%.

- Similarly, Unisa's score for reduced inequalities' **FWCI** was 38,0, also in the upper half of the interquartile band, based on a FWCI of 1,31 compared to the worldwide median FWCI of 0,90, an excellent performance.

SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (first time submitted)

A total of 1 086 universities were ranked in the SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Overview of Unisa's performance in SDG 16 and performance in the research pillar in the 2024 impact rankings results
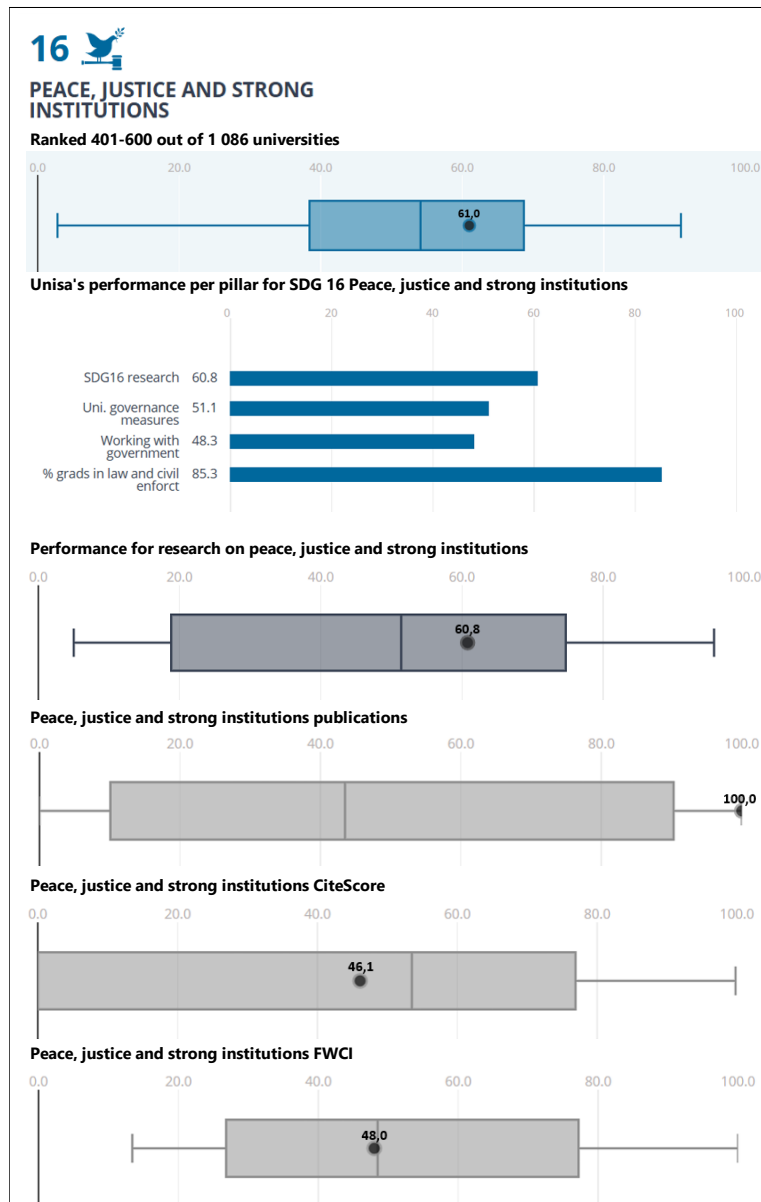
- Unisa's **overall score** for Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions was 61,0 in 2024, in the upper half of the interquartile band, placing Unisa in the 401-600 band out of 1 086 universities. This is now Unisa's **second best-performing SDG**.

- Unisa's overall score for the **research pillar** of Peace, justice and strong institutions was 60,8, in the upper half of the interquartile band worldwide.

- For Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions **publications**, Unisa achieved a score of 100,0, the same as the top score worldwide. This was based on 499 publications compared to the worldwide median of 12, an exceptional performance.

- The Unisa score for Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions' **CiteScore** was 46,1, close to the median of 53,5. With 48 publications in top journals, Unisa's percentage of publications in top journals of 10% was marginally below the worldwide median percentage of 11%.

- Unisa's score for peace, justice, and strong institution FWCI was 38,0, marginally below the median of 48,5 and was based on an FWCI of 0,89, marginally above the worldwide median FWCI of 0,86, a good performance.

SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals (compulsory for inclusion in the overall ranking)

A total of 2 031 universities were ranked in the SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals, **once again the most popular SDG.**

A summary of Unisa's overall performance in SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals and more detail on the performance in the research pillar is presented in Figure 16 below.
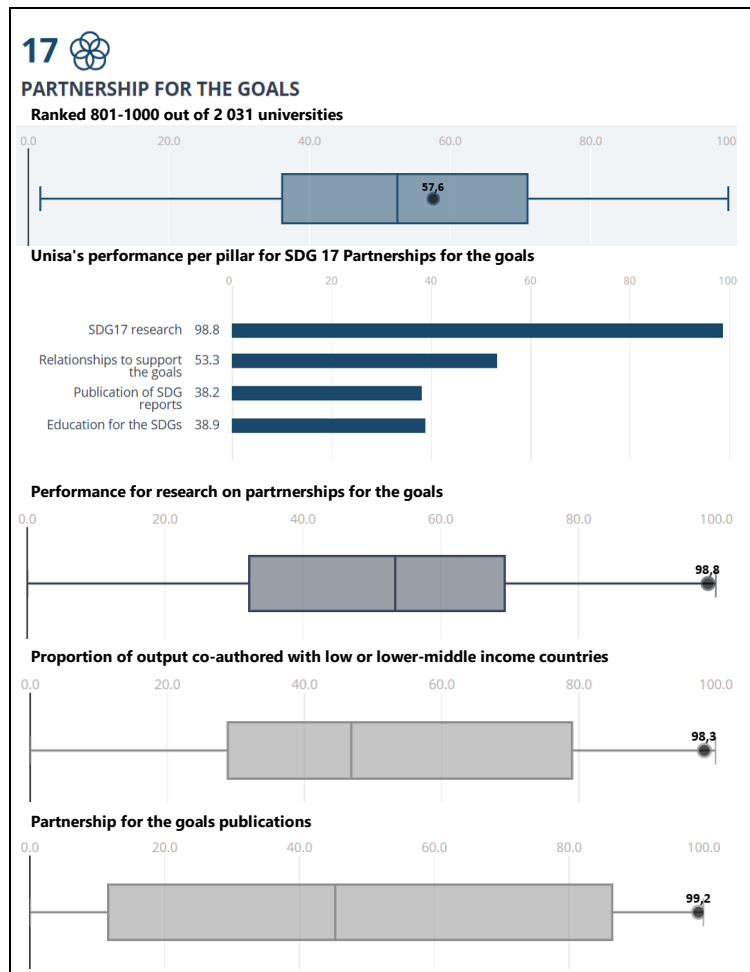
- Unisa's **overall score** for Partnerships for the goals of 57,6 in 2024, in the upper half of the interquartile band, placed **Unisa in the 801-1000 band** out of 2 031 universities. Compared to 2023, the score was 57,8 in the 601-800 band out of 1,625 universities. Despite the score remaining at the same level, the band decreased because of the increased number of universities.

- Unisa's overall score for the **research pillar** of Partnerships for the goals was 98,8, close to the top score of 100,0 worldwide, an excellent achievement.

- For **the proportion of output co-authored with low or lower-middle-income countries**, Unisa achieved a score of 98,3, fractionally below the top score worldwide of 100,0. This was based on a proportion of 21,8% compared to the worldwide median of 7,1%. This is a significant contribution to working together to achieve the goals.

- For partnerships for the goals **publications**, Unisa achieved a score of 99,2, also fractionally below the top score worldwide of 100,0. This was based on 4 052

publications compared to the worldwide median of 510, an exceptional performance. This confirms Unisa's excellent contributions across most SDGs. The cumulative effect of research contributions towards all the SDGs, not only those for which data was submitted, contributed to that.

2.3 National Rankings

The KPI 1.3 of the 2022 Annual Performance Plan focuses on improving Unisa's per capita research outputs from 1,6 to 2,0 overall per academic staff. The DHET Report on the Evaluation of the 2022 Universities' Research Outputs, which provides a comparative analysis of universities' research output units, allows universities to benchmark against each other on various measures.

2.3.1 Research Publications Output

Unisa's research publication output units between 2012 and 2022 is presented in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Unisa's research publications output units, 2012-2022

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Publications Output	892,52	1 030,04	1 172,84	1 328,60	1 441,49	1 283,50	1 299,27	1 366,62	1323,22	1390,30	1521,55
% change		15,4%	13,9%	13,3%	8,5%	-11,0%	1,2%	5,2%	-3,2%	5,1%	9,4%
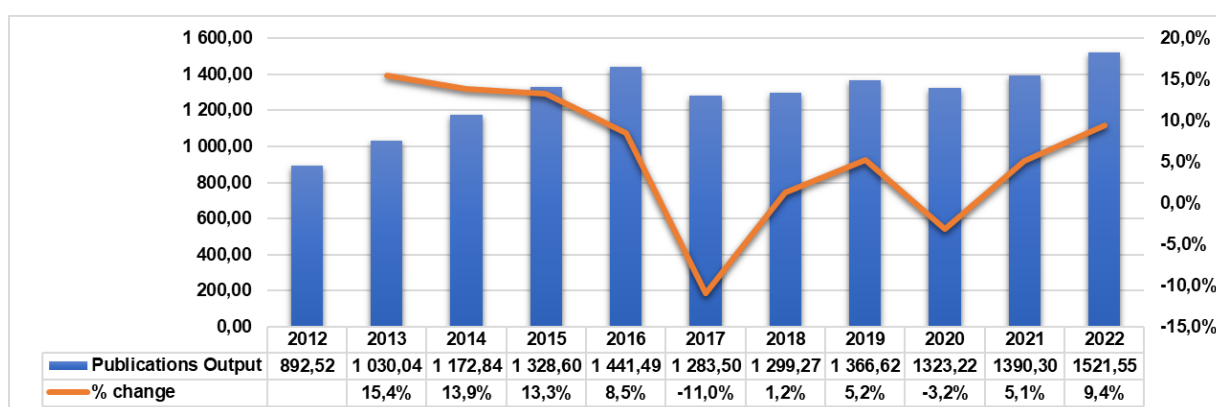
Unisa's research publications output increased by 9,4 % (131,25 units), from 1 390,30 to 1 521,55 between 2021 and 2022. This retained it in 8th place relative to the sector regarding overall publications output- a position it has held since 2017.

Figure 18 below provides a sector comparison of research publications output between 2020 and 2022.

Figure 18: Sector comparison of research publications output, 2020-2022

	UJ	UKZN	UP	SU	WITS	UCT	NWU	UNISA	UFS	UWC	DUT	NMU	RU	UL	TUT	UV	WSU	CPUT	UFH	SMU	UZ	CUT	VUT	MUT	UMP	SPU
2020	2 305,6	2 402,4	2 099,8	2 188,5	1 924,2	1 886,8	1 536,6	1 323,2	1 321,4	603,9	449,0	564,4	535,1	371,2	328,9	223,7	154,9	231,5	275,4	174,3	267,5	172,1	195,4	105,5	64,0	29,3
2021	2 753,4	2 658,2	2 353,1	2 157,9	2 443,6	1 801,1	1 656,0	1 390,3	1 270,9	651,1	423,7	580,6	594,5	570,4	274,0	116,2	192,2	334,0	245,2	238,8	238,4	157,7	138,4	68,9	57,6	50,1
2022	3 143,7	2 562,7	2 305,2	2 255,1	2 206,4	1 777,3	1 706,2	1 521,5	1 406,4	696,6	564,2	550,0	549,6	461,6	453,4	337,8	331,8	329,2	291,9	230,2	205,3	181,9	120,9	82,4	82,0	49,5

Unisa retained 8th position regarding overall research publications output for 2022. This is despite a 9,4% increase between 2021 and 2022, resulting in 131,2 more awarded publications output units for 2022 relative to 2021 (1 521,5 vs. 1390,3).

2.3.2 Sector Per Capita Research Publications Output

Figure 19 below provides a sector comparison of per capita research publications output.

Figure 19: Per capita research publications output, 2020-2022

	UJ	UKZN	WITS	UP	SU	UFS	RU	UCT	UWC	NWU	UFH	UNISA	DUT	NMU	UV	UL	UZ	CUT	TUT	UMP	CPUT	MUT	WSU	VUT	SPU	SMU
2020	1,83	2,00	1,61	1,77	1,82	1,50	1,52	1,63	0,89	0,99	0,80	0,77	0,69	0,84	0,53	0,63	0,85	0,56	0,37	0,46	0,30	0,48	0,19	0,52	0,22	0,28
2021	2,10	2,18	2,01	1,87	1,66	1,47	1,66	1,52	0,97	1,00	0,75	0,78	0,60	0,83	0,27	0,93	0,69	0,50	0,31	0,34	0,43	0,30	0,21	0,38	0,36	0,34
2022	2,37	2,18	1,87	1,82	1,74	1,63	1,49	1,49	1,15	1,02	0,87	0,84	0,83	0,77	0,72	0,70	0,61	0,57	0,52	0,46	0,40	0,39	0,37	0,35	0,35	0,33
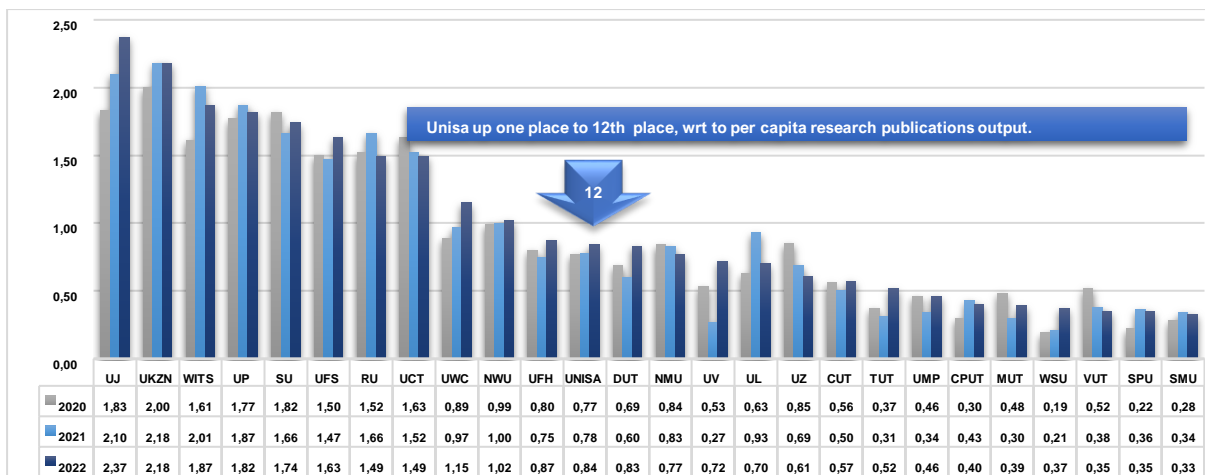
Regarding Unisa's per capita research publications output, a ratio of research publications units by permanently employed academics, a 7,7% increase was observed, from 0,78 to 0,84 between 2021 and 2022. This improved its position relative to the sector from 13th to 12th.

2.3.3 Sector Publications Output by Index

Figure 20 below provides Unisa's total journal output units submitted to the DHET for subsidy from 2019 to 2023 and Figure 21 below provides the proportional disaggregation thereof. The journal index indicates where an institution publishes, that is, its research footprint, which can influence access and citation of journal publications and consequently influence research rankings.

Figure 20: Total units submitted to DHET per index, 2019-2023

	DHET	DOAJ	IBSS	ISI/WoS	Norwegian	SciELO	Scopus
2019	206,91	0,00	96,33	407,19	0,50	52,90	405,09
2020	146,61	0,00	124,00	449,85	0,00	41,83	375,59
2021	121,67	172,50	94,20	402,65	1,00	13,58	433,73
2022	160,20	238,57	50,83	139,86	0,00	28,92	732,57
2023	247,99	400,25	90,48	143,62	6,66	20,67	629,87
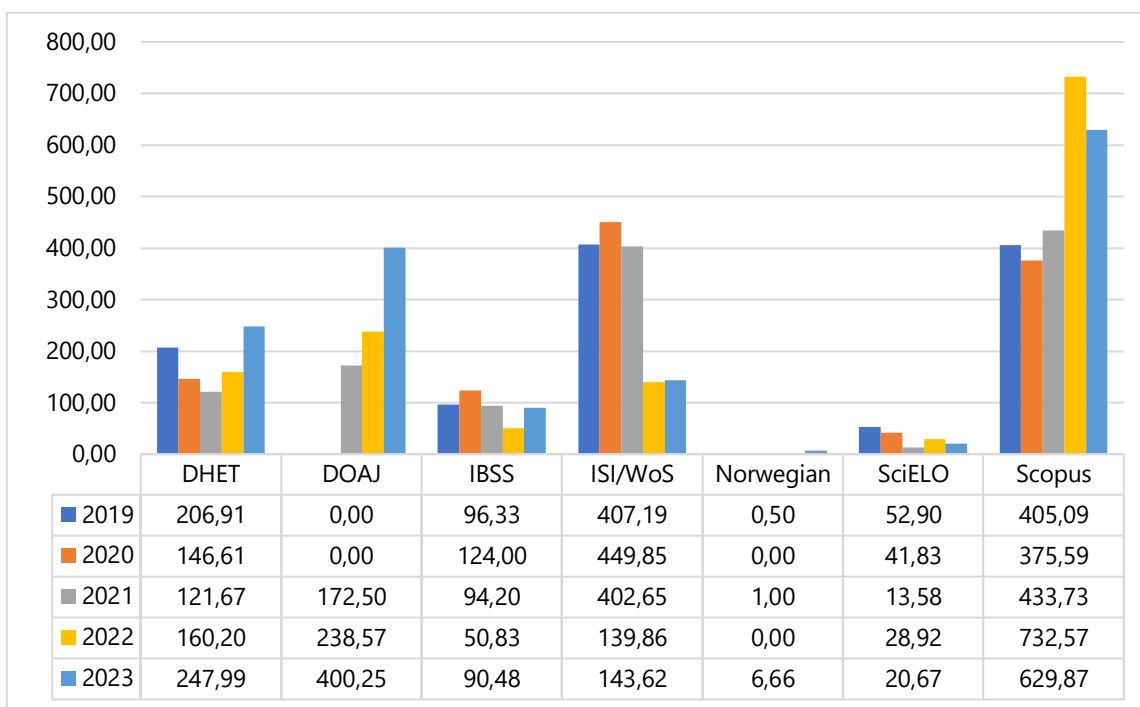
Evidently, most of Unisa's publications were in Web of Sciences journals and Scopus from 2019 to 2021, then from 2022 to 2023, Scopus accounted for 54,2% and 40,9% of journal publications, respectively. Publications in WoS reduced to 10,4%, then 9,3% for 2022 and 2023, with the rise in publications in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) from 17,7% in 2022 to 26,0% in 2023. Increases were also observed in DHET journal publications from 11,9% in 2022 to 16,1% in 2023, pushing it to 3rd position after DOAJ.

Figure 21: Percentage of journal output units submitted to the DHET per index, 2019-2023

	DHET	DOAJ	IBSS	ISI/WoS	Norwegian	SciELO	Scopus
2019	17,7%	0,0%	8,2%	34,8%	0,0%	4,5%	34,7%
2020	12,9%	0,0%	10,9%	39,5%	0,0%	3,7%	33,0%
2021	9,8%	13,9%	7,6%	32,5%	0,1%	1,1%	35,0%
2022	11,9%	17,7%	3,8%	10,4%	0,0%	2,1%	54,2%
2023	16,1%	26,0%	5,9%	9,3%	0,4%	1,3%	40,9%
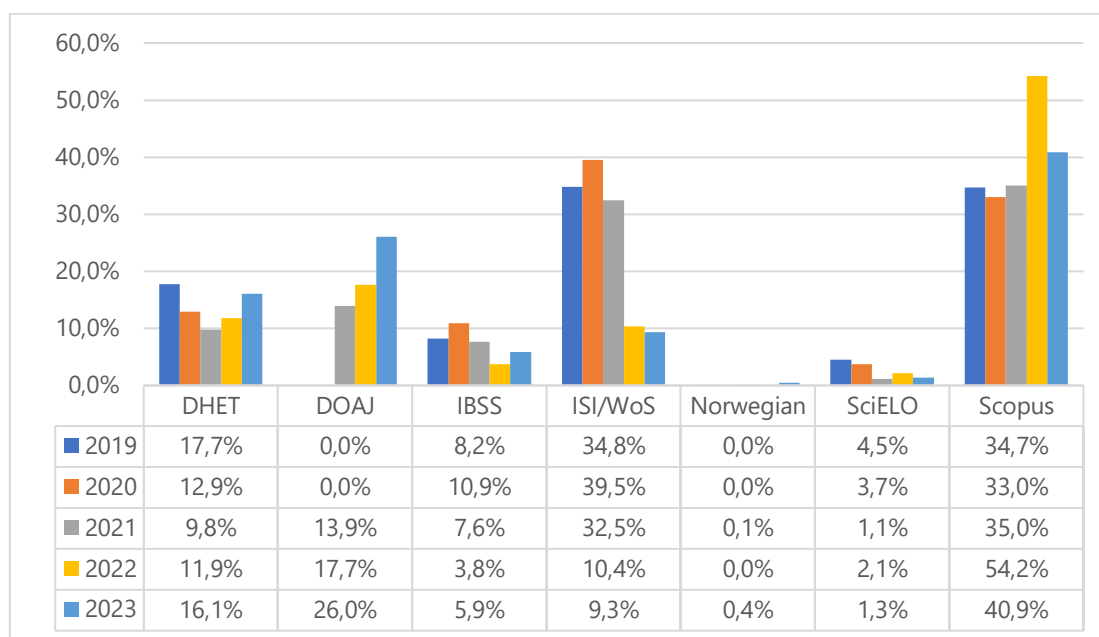
2.3.4 Catalytic Niche Areas

Unisa's catalytic niche areas (CNAs) were introduced in 2021 to inform scholarly contributions by focusing on specific subject areas to not only "solidify the University's place in the South African higher education landscape but also to expand its African and Global footprints."[1]

Ten CNAs have been identified, namely:

1. Marine Studies,
2. Aviation and Aeronautical studies,
3. Automotive,
4. Energy,
5. Space study and Square Kilometer Array,
6. Fourth Industrial Revolution and Digitalisation,
7. Natural Sciences/ Biotechnological studies,
8. Health Studies/Medicine,
9. Feminist, Womanist, Bosadi Theorisations and
10. Student Support and Co-Curricular activities

Table 14 below provides 2023 publications and research output units (ROU) by CNA and the proportions thereof.

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[1] https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/College-of-Graduate-Studies/Catalytic-Niche-Areas/About

Table 14: 2023 Publications and research outputs units per CNA

Catalytic Niche Area	Publications	%	ROUs	%
Marine Studies	98	2,1%	39,0	2,0%
Aviation and Aeronautical Studies	13	0,3%	6,6	0,3%
Automotive	108	2,4%	47,5	2,4%
Energy	171	3,7%	47,5	2,4%
Space study and Square kilometer array (SKA)	16	0,4%	6,7	0,3%
Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and digitalisation	**440**	**9,6%**	**179,5**	**9,0%**
Natural sciences (Biotechnological studies)	**1 092**	**23,9%**	**350,2**	**17,6%**
Health Studies/Medicine	**347**	**7,6%**	**128,0**	**6,4%**
Feminist, Womanist, Bosadi Theorizations	72	1,6%	46,0	2,3%
Student Support and Co-curricular activities	129	2,8%	60,4	3,0%
Subtotal	*2 486*	*54,4%*	*911,4*	*45,8%*
Other	1 991	43,6%	1039,4	52,2%
Unknown	94	2,1%	40,9	2,1%
Sub-total	*2 085*	*45,6%*	*1080,3*	*54,2%*
Total	**4 571**	**100,0%**	**1991,7**	**100,0%**

- Evidently, Unisa's publications are mostly in natural sciences or biotechnological studies, accounting for approximately 24% of 2023 publications and 17,6% of research output units.

- Publications in 4IR and digitalisation following accounting for almost 10% of all 2023 publications and 9,0% of research output units, while Health Studies/Medicine accounted for 7,6% of CAN publications and 6,4% for research output units, respectively.

- The CNAs with the least number of publications were aviation and aeronautical studies, and space studies and SKA, which accounted for 0,3% and 0,4% of publications and 0,3% for research output units, respectively.

2.3.5 Creative Output and Innovations

Figure 22 below provides Unisa's submitted and awarded creative output for 2020-2022.

Figure 22: Unisa's submitted vs. awarded creative outputs, 2020-2022

	Submitted 2020	Awarded 2020	Submitted 2021	Awarded 2021	Submitted 2022	Awarded 2022
Unisa	21	12,83	4	4,24	15	11,22
% Awarded		61,1%		105,9%		74,8%
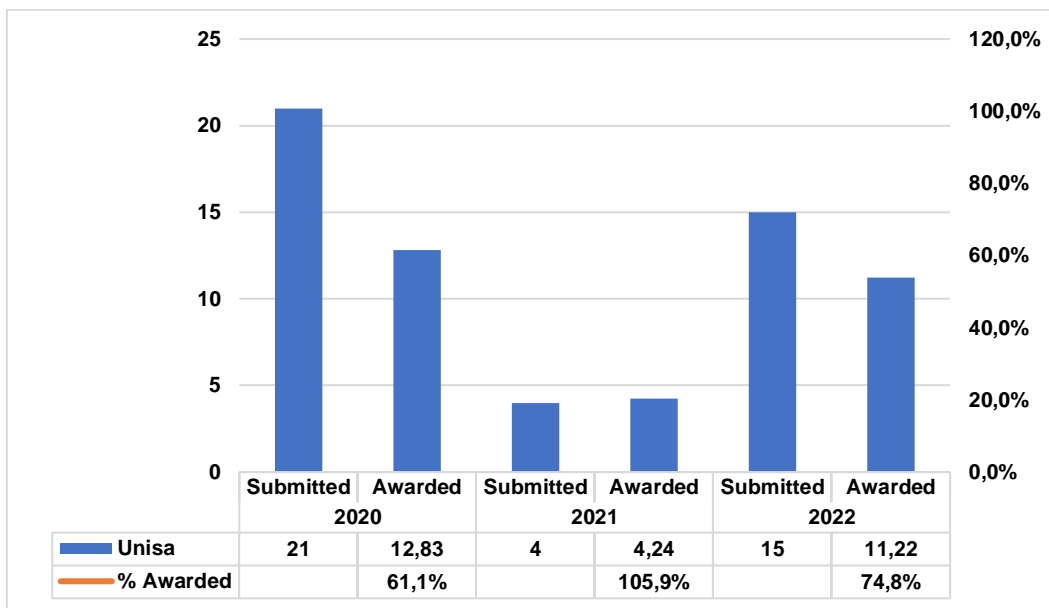
- Evidently, Unisa submitted 275,0% more outputs for 2021 compared to 2022 (15 vs. 4), and their awarded output units increased by 165,0%, from 4,24 to 11,22 units.
- Looking at awarded output units as a proportion of submitted outputs, proportionally more output units were awarded for 2021 (105,9%) relative to 2022 (74,5%).

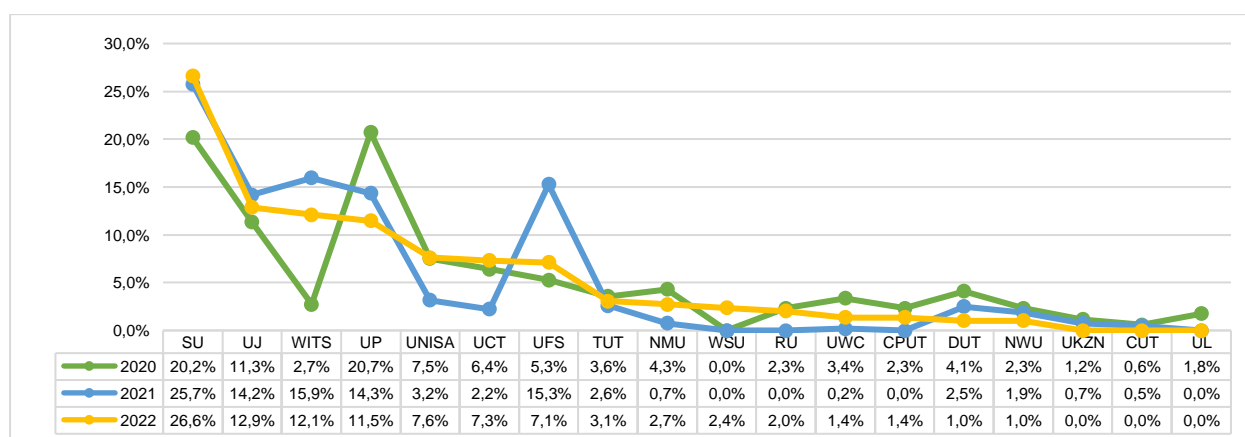Table 15 below, shows Unisa's performance relative to the sector.

Institution	2020		2021		2022	
	Submitted	Awarded	Submitted	Awarded	Submitted	Units Awarded
SU	39	34,45	40	34,53	41	39,20
UJ	20	19,33	17	19,00	18	19,00
WITS	11	4,67	23	21,39	23	17,83
UP	38	35,37	23	19,25	20	16,92
UNISA	21	12,83	4	4,24	15	11,22
UCT	9	10,92	11	3,00	8	10,81
UFS	34	9	29	20,50	18	10,5
TUT	14	6,11	4	3,50	9	4,5
NMU	12	7,33	4	1,00	6	4
WSU	0	0	0	0	4	3,5
RU	3	4	0	0,00	7	3
UWC	7	5,75	1	0,26	4	2
CPUT	4	4	0	0,00	3	2
DUT	9	7	6	3,33	4	1,5
NWU	6	4	5	2,50	2	1,5
UKZN	2	2	1	1,00	0	0
CUT	3	1	1	0,67	0	0
UL	3	3	0	0,00	0	0
Total	235	170,76	169	134,164	182	147,48

- Although Unisa ranked 6th for submitted creative outputs for 2022, it ranked 5th regarding awarded creative output units, a one-place improvement from 2021.

Figure 23 below shows a sector comparison of awarded creative output units, 2020-2022.

- *Figure 23: Sector comparison of awarded creative output units, 2020-2022*

	SU	UJ	WITS	UP	UNISA	UCT	UFS	TUT	NMU	WSU	RU	UWC	CPUT	DUT	NWU	UKZN	CUT	UL
2020	20,2%	11,3%	2,7%	20,7%	7,5%	6,4%	5,3%	3,6%	4,3%	0,0%	2,3%	3,4%	2,3%	4,1%	2,3%	1,2%	0,6%	1,8%
2021	25,7%	14,2%	15,9%	14,3%	3,2%	2,2%	15,3%	2,6%	0,7%	0,0%	0,0%	0,2%	0,0%	2,5%	1,9%	0,7%	0,5%	0,0%
2022	26,6%	12,9%	12,1%	11,5%	7,6%	7,3%	7,1%	3,1%	2,7%	2,4%	2,0%	1,4%	1,4%	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%

- Proportionally, Unisa's contribution to overall awarded creative output units increased from 3,2% in 2021 to 7,6% in 2022 (Figure 23).

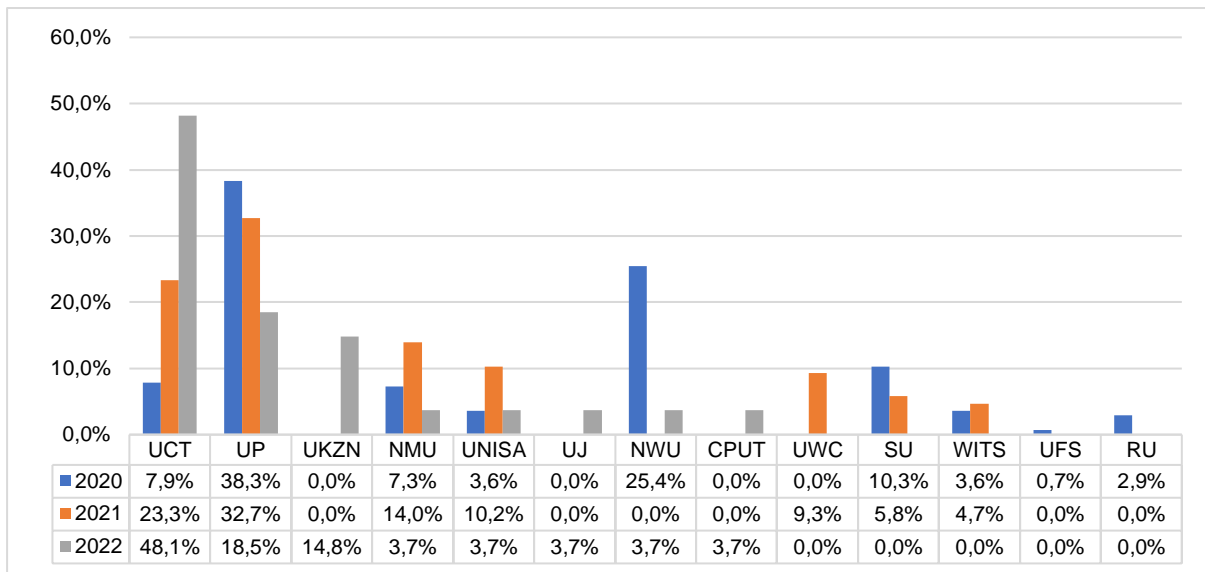Table 16 below presents sector awarded innovations output units, 2020-2022.

Table 16: Sector awarded innovations output units, 2020-2022.[2]

Institution	2020	2021	2022
UCT	4,33	10,00	26,00
UP	21,11	14,03	10,00
UKZN	0,00	0,00	8,00
NMU	4,00	6,00	2,00
UNISA	2,00	4,40	2,00
UJ	0,00	0,00	2,00
NWU	14,00	0,00	2,00
CPUT	0,00	0,00	2,00
UWC	0,00	4,00	0,00
SU	5,65	2,50	0,00
WITS	2,00	2,00	0,00
UFS	0,40	0,00	0,00
RU	1,60	0,00	0,00
Total Units	**55,09**	**42,93**	**54,00**

- Unisa was awarded 54,5% fewer innovations output units for 2022 compared to 2021 (2,00 vs. 4,40). However, this did not affect its position relative to the sector in Figure 24 below, which remained in 4th place despite a drop in its proportional contribution from 10,2% to 3,7%.

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[2] The DHET report does not provide data on submitted innovations output, hence its exclusion from the table.

Figure 24: Sector comparison of awarded innovations output units, 2020-2022

	UCT	UP	UKZN	NMU	UNISA	UJ	NWU	CPUT	UWC	SU	WITS	UFS	RU
2020	7,9%	38,3%	0,0%	7,3%	3,6%	0,0%	25,4%	0,0%	0,0%	10,3%	3,6%	0,7%	2,9%
2021	23,3%	32,7%	0,0%	14,0%	10,2%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	9,3%	5,8%	4,7%	0,0%	0,0%
2022	48,1%	18,5%	14,8%	3,7%	3,7%	3,7%	3,7%	3,7%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%

3 RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS PERFORMANCE

3.1 Overall Research Publications Performance

Table 17 below provides a comparative bibliometric and scientometric analysis of Unisa's research publications performance for 2019-2023 using SciVal and InCites. The scholarly output/documents include journal articles, books and chapters, and conference proceedings.

Table 17: SciVal vs. InCites Bibliometric and Scientometric Analysis, 2019-2023.[3]

SciVal (Scopus)		InCites (Web of Science)	
Scholarly Output	10 984[4]	**Web of Science Documents**	9 116
Open Access	46,90%	**% All Open Access Documents**	50,21%
Citation Count	105 413	**Times Cited**	80 024
h5-index	85	**H-Index**	89
Field-Weighted Citation Impact	1,14	**Category Normalized Citation Impact**	1
Citations per Publication	9,60	**Citation Impact**	8,48
Cited Publications %	74,64%	**% Documents Cited**	71,86%
% Publications in the top 1% most cited	1,40%	**% Documents in Top 1%**	1,22%
% Publications in the top 10% most cited	12,50%	**% Documents in Top 10%**	10,20%
International Collaborations	40,50%	**% International Collaborations**	43,07%

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[3] Extracted 30 October 2024.

[4] 7 792 (70,9%) were journal articles.

- Evidently, Unisa had more publication outputs listed for SciVal compared to InCites for 2019-2023 (10 984 vs. 9 116) and consequently better bibliometric and scientometric values for SciVal compared to InCites. For example, Unisa's citation count for SciVal was 105,413, with a field-weighted citation impact of 1,14 and 9,60 citations per 74,64% cited publications. Moreover, 1,4% of publications were in the top 1%, with 12,5% in the Top 10%.

- In comparison, InCites's citation count was 80 024, reflecting 25 389 citations less than SciVal, with a category normalised citation impact of 1,0 and 8,48 citations per 71,86% cited publications. The percentage of documents in the top 1% and top 10% was 1,22% and 10,2%, respectively.

- InCites metrics that were better than SciVal were the proportion of open access documents (50,21% vs. 46,90%) and the proportion of internationally collaborated publications (43,07% vs. 40,50%).

Regarding the percentage growth in SciVal vs InCites output for 2019 to 2023 provided in Table 18 below, not only was there 43,3% growth in SciVal scholarly output but there was a growth year on year, whereas InCites output only grew by 12,2% overall and decreased by 2,1% between 2022 and 2023, following a negligent growth of 0,3% between 2021 and 2022.

Table 18: SciVal vs InCites Scholarly Output, 2019-2023.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019-2023
SciVal output	1 854	2 044	2 140	2 290	2 656	10 984
% change SciVal output		*10,2%*	*4,7%*	*7,0%*	*16,0%*	*492,4%*
InCites Output	1 648	1 847	1 883	1 889	1 849	9 116

3.1.1 Open Access Publications

Figure 25 below provides a comparative analysis of open-access publications in SciVal vs. InCites for 2019 to 2023.

Figure 25: InCites vs. SciVal percentage of documents published in open access, 2019-2023
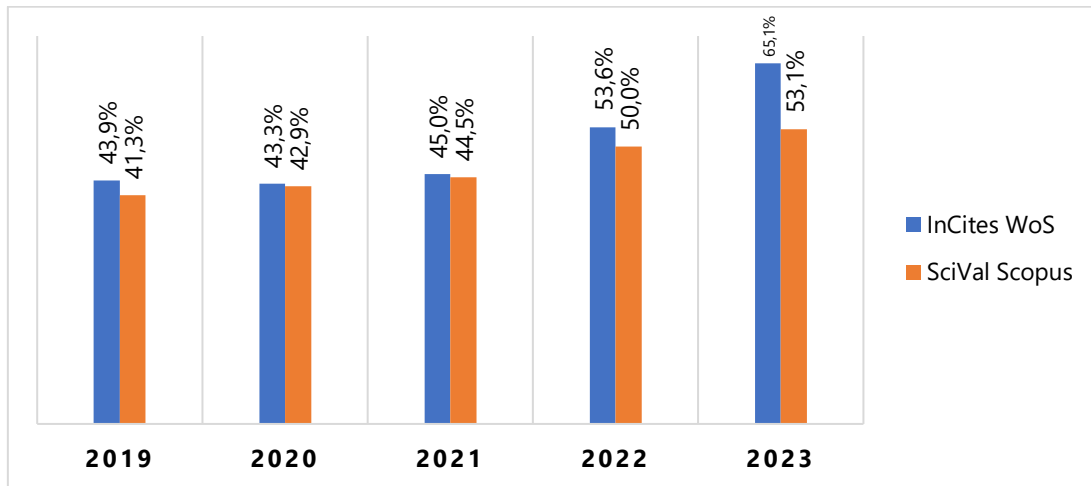
- Evidently, InCites had more open-access publications than SciVal from 2019 to 2023, with its highest proportion being in 2023 (65,1% vs. 53,1%). SciVal's 2023 proportion, 53,1%, was also its highest for the period under observation.

Publishing via open access allows greater access to scholarly output, which can promote better engagement with the output and possibly higher citations. As such, Unisans should be encouraged to publish via open access.

3.1.2 Internationally Collaborated Publications

Figure 26 below presents details on InCites vs. SciVal percentage of internationally collaborated publications, 2019-2023.

Figure 26: InCites vs. SciVal percentage of internationally collaborated publications, 2019-2023.
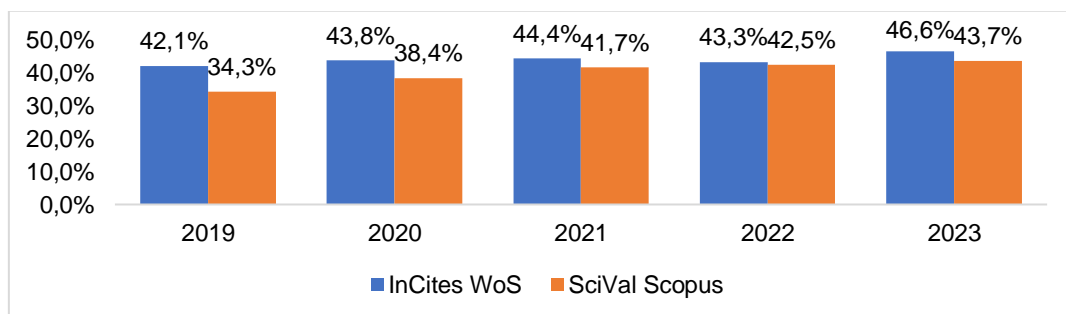

- International collaborations increased from 42,1% and 34,3% to 46,6% and 43,7% between 2019 and 2023 for InCites and SciVal, respectively.

As with open-access publications, international collaborations promote greater exposure to the research, consequently improving engagement, citations, and rankings. Therefore, scholars need to be encouraged to pursue international collaborations.

Figure 27 below provide SciVal's publication share by subject area for 2019-2023 and Figure 28 also provides SciVal's publication share by subject area and the Field-Weighted Citation Impact, whereas Figure 29 below provides InCites' publication share by subject area. With the subject areas named differently, it becomes difficult to compare the two systems.

Figure 27: SciVal's publication share by subject area, 2019-2023
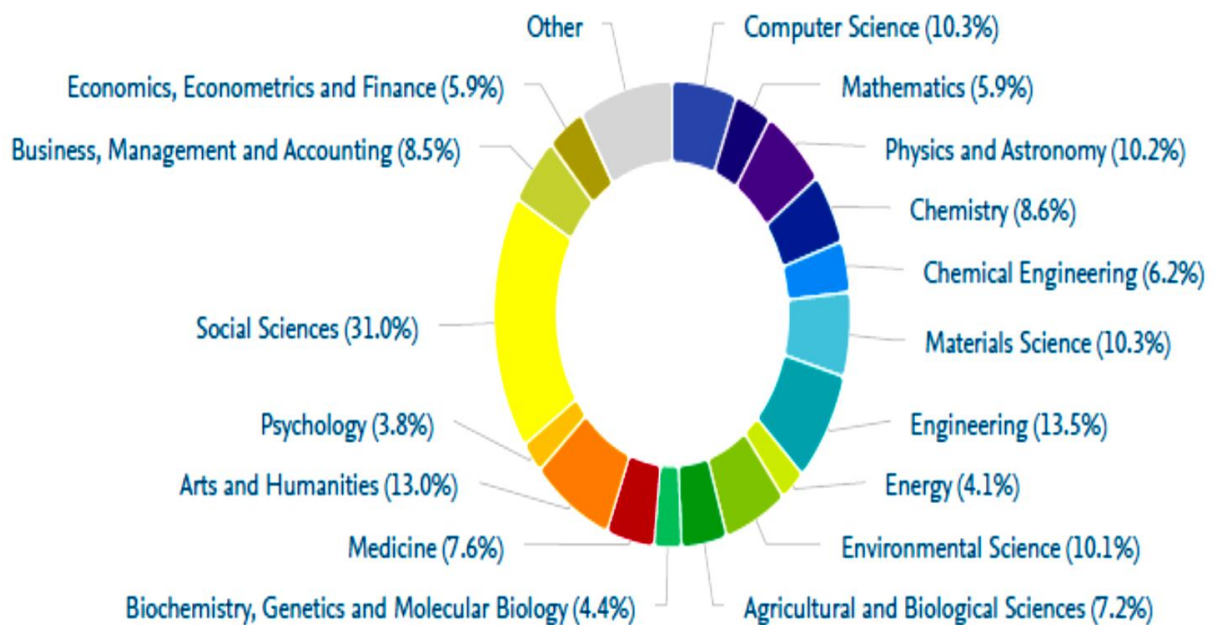
For SciVal, most of the publications were in the social sciences (31,0%), Engineering (13,5%), Arts and Humanities (13,0%), Computer Science (10,3%), Materials Science (10,3%), Physics and Astronomy (10,2%) and Environmental Science (10,1%).

Figure 28: InCites publication share by subject area, 2019-2023

IMMUNOLOGY: 2.8%
PUBLIC, ENVIRONMENTAL & OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: 4.4%
COMPUTER SCIENCE, INFORMATION SYSTEMS: 4.5%
NEUROSCIENCES: 4.2%
PHARMACOLOGY & PHARMACY: 4.4%
PHYSICS, CONDENSED MATTER: 2.4%
ENGINEERING, ENVIRONMENTAL: 1.9%
CELL BIOLOGY: 2.8%
COMPUTER SCIENCE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: 4.6%
ENGINEERING, CHEMICAL: 3.2%
ONCOLOGY: 6.4%
ENERGY & FUELS: 4.2%
NANOSCIENCE & NANOTECHNOLOGY: 3.2%

MATERIALS SCIENCE, MULTIDISCIPLINARY: 10.1%
CHEMISTRY, MULTIDISCIPLINARY: 6.7%
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES: 7.1%
CHEMISTRY, PHYSICAL: 5.2%
ENGINEERING, ELECTRICAL & ELECTRONIC: 10.2%
BIOCHEMISTRY & MOLECULAR BIOLOGY: 5.7%
PHYSICS, APPLIED: 5.9%

- For InCites, Engineering, Electrical and Electronic, and Materials Science and Multidisciplinary accounted for approximately 10% of the publications, followed by Environmental Sciences (7,1%), chemistry, multidisciplinary (6,7%), and oncology (6,4%).

Figure 29 below presents SciVal publications and Field-Weighted Citation Impact by subject area, 2019-2023.

Figure 29: SciVal publications and Field-Weighted Citation Impact by subject area, 2019-2023
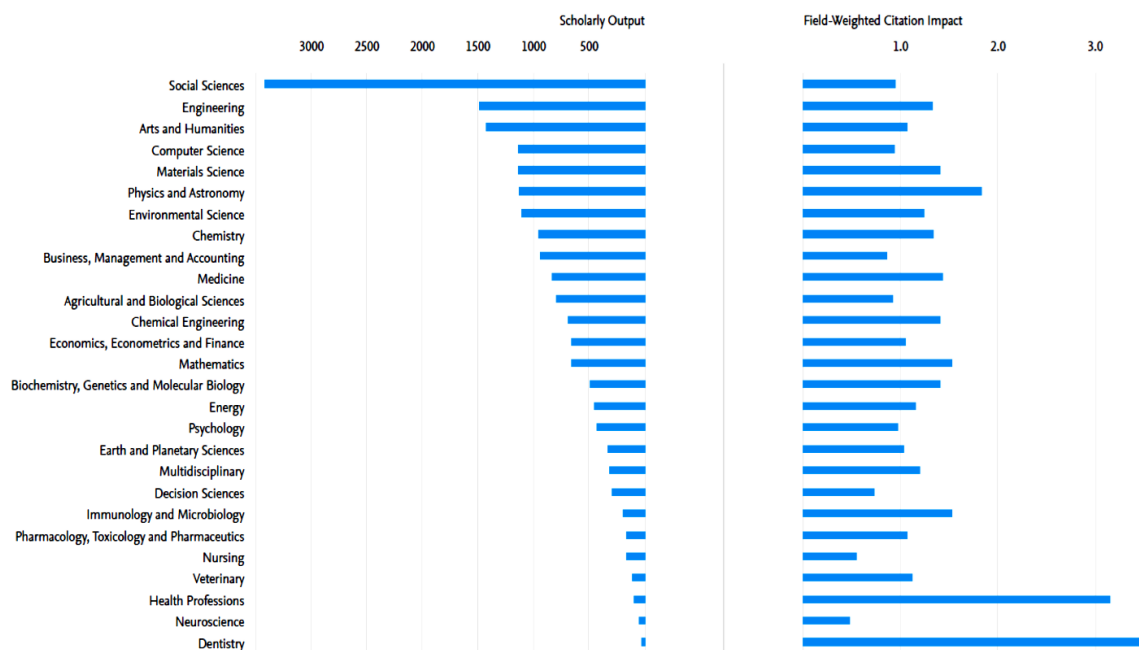
- Looking at Figure 29 above, having a larger publications share does not translate to a higher field-weighted citation impact. Social Sciences, whose publication share was the largest, had a lower FWCI than Dentistry and Health Professions, which had the largest FWCIs.

3.2 National Publications Performance

Tables 19 and 20 below present InCites (WoS) and SciVal (Scopus) Top 10 institutions by scholarly output 2019-2023, respectively.

Table 19: InCites (WoS) Top 10 institutions by scholarly output, 2019-2023

Institution	Rank	WoS Documents	Category Normalised Citation Impact	Citation Impact
University of Cape Town	1	22 189	1,75	16,22
University of Witwatersrand	2	21 323	1,36	11,60
University of Johannesburg	3	17 558	1,21	11,23
Stellenbosch University	4	17 307	1,38	14,15
University of KwaZulu-Natal	5	16 814	1,26	13,96
University of Pretoria	6	16 793	1,13	9,95
North-West University	7	9 910	1,29	13,76
University of South Africa	**8**	**9 116**	**1,00**	**8,78**
University of Free State	9	7 733	1,06	8,96
University of Western Cape	10	5 820	1,44	14,05

Unisa is ranked in eighth place by both InCites and SciVal, albeit with varying numbers of scholarly output and bibliometrics. For Incites, Unisa had 9 116 documents between 2019 and 2023, with a category normalised citation impact (CNCI) of 1,00, which is on par with the global average, and a citation impact of 8,78. For SciVal, Unisa had 10 984 documents, with a field weighted citation impact (FWCI) of 1,14, slightly above the global average of 1,00, and 9,6 citations per publication.

In both instances, Unisa's citation impact was the lowest, despite their ranking 8th, even lower than 9th and 10th place holders, the University of Free State, and the University of Western Cape, despite having fewer publications than Unisa.

Table 20: SciVal (Scopus) Top 10 institutions by scholarly output, 2019-2023.

Institution	Rank	Scholarly Output	Field Weighted Citation Impact	Citations per Publication
University of Cape Town	1	22 391	1,86	18,5
University of Witwatersrand	2	22 090	1,50	13,5
University of Johannesburg	3	21 634	1,32	11,8
University of KwaZulu-Natal	4	19 102	1,43	14,9
University of Pretoria	5	18 529	1,21	10,8
Stellenbosch University	6	18 511	1,57	16,1
North-West University	7	11 125	1,44	15,4
University of South Africa	**8**	**10 984**	**1,14**	**9,6**
University of Free State	9	8 596	1,25	11,6
University of Western Cape	10	6 544	1,50	14,7

3.3 Researcher Performance

Table 21 and 22 below provides Unisa's top 10 authors for 2019 to 2023 according to InCites and SciVal respectively, including the proportion of internationally collaborated publications, citation impact and CNC/FWCI.

Table 21: InCites Top 10 authors for Unisa, 2019-2023.

Person Name	Rank	WoS Documents	% International Collaborations	% Documents in Top 1%	% Documents in Top 10%	Citation Impact	Category Normalised Citation Impact
Maaza, Malik	1	308	88,31%	1,62%	19,16%	21,32	1,33
Kaviyarasu, K	2	167	98,20%	7,19%	37,13%	32,81	2,37
Mamba Bhekie	3	165	64,85%	0,61%	16,36%	27,46	1,20
Ebeneso, Eno E	4	137	94,89%	6,57%	36,50%	33,59	1,88
Msagati, Titus A.M	5	125	61,60%	0,00%	8,80%	16,06	0,87
Nkambule, Thabo	6	106	57,55%	2,83%	19,81%	17,77	1,43
Odhiambo, Nicholas M.	7	104	3,85%	4,81%	22,12%	19,64	1,80
Kuveraga, Alex Tawanda	8	99	62,63%	1,01%	23,23%	25,24	1,60
Avazzadeh, Z	9	98	86,73%	2,04%	28,57%	15,21	2,26
Liu, Xinying	10	87	79,31%	0,00%	12,64%	14,06	0,94
Thwala, Wellington	11	81	50,62%	0,00%	7,41%	7,63	0,87

Okorte, Uduakobong	12	70	84,29%	0,00%	20,00%	18,87	1,38

- Evidently, there are some similarities and differences in who the Top 10 authors were and their ranking between the two sources, including the number of scholarly documents they produced, the percentage of international collaborations, and CNCI and FWCI.

- Maaza ranked first place for both. However, Kaviyarasu, Mamba, Msagati, Nkambule and Odhiambo ranked second, third, fifth and sixth on InCites and third, second, sixth, ninth and fourth, respectively, for SciVal. Three scholars had a CNCI below par, Msagati, Liu and Thwala, whereas, for SciVal, all scholars had FWCIs above par.

- Regarding the **number of publications, their international collaborations and CNCI/FWCI**, evidently having more scholarly output and a higher proportion of internationally collaborated publications, do not translate to a higher CNIC/FWCI. For example, looking at Table 22 below, Msagati and Thwala had the same CNCI of 0,87, despite Msagati having more WoS documents (125 vs 81) and a slightly higher proportion of internationally collaborated publications than Thwala (61,6% vs 50,62%).

- Instead, having a higher proportion of documents in the top 10% (16% and above) seemed to be better associated with a CNCI/FWCI above par (above 1,00). For example, for InCites, Mamba had 165 documents, of which 64,85% were internationally collaborated, and 16,36% were in the top 10%, with a CNCI of 1,22. This was only 0,13 points below Maaza, who had 308 documents, with an international collaboration of 88,31% and 19,16% of documents in the top 10%. For SciVal, Maaza and Odhiambo had the same FWCI of 1,71 despite Maaza having 155 more documents, a higher international collaboration percentage (86,70% vs 28,00%) and a higher proportion of outputs in the top 10% (32,0% vs. 20,0%). Kaviyarasu, who had the highest CNCI, 2,37, and FWCI (2.91), had the highest proportion of documents in the top 10% for both InCites (37,13%) and SciVal (47,10%).

Table 22: SciVal Top 10 authors for Unisa, 2019-2023

Entity	Rank	Scholarly output	International Collaboration (%)	International Collaboration Impact	Outputs in Top 10% Citation Percentile (%)	Citation Count	Cited Publications (%)	Field-Weighted Citation Impact
Maaza, Malik	1	300	86,7%	26,3	32,0%	7391	95,0%	1,71
Mamba, Bhekie	2	221	63,4%	30,4	33,9%	5552	94,6%	1,33
Kaviyarasu, K	3	170	98,2%	34,5	47,1%	5767	95,3%	2,91
Odhiambo, Nicholas M.	4	145	28,0%	68,5	20,0%	2853	96,6%	1,71
Ezema, Fabian Ifeanyichukwu	5	136	100,0%	25,4	29,4%	3454	94,1%	1,77
Msagati, Titus A.M	6	134	63,4%	19,0	23,1%	2424	92,5%	1,05
Ebeneso, Eno E	7	128	95,3%	26,9	44,5%	3340	89,1%	2,25
Simplice, Asongu Anutachie	8	120	50,8%	25,0	35,0%	3108	95,8%	2,23
Nkambule, Thato T.L	9	109	55,1%	24,7	31,2%	2154	93,6%	1,49
Wang, Zenghui	10	108	42,6%	12,7	18,5%	2075	89,8%	1,81
Jafari, Hossein	11	107	98,1%	18,1	29,9%	2005	91,6%	2,45
Liu, Xingying	12	97	78,4%	15,6	29,9%	1349	91,8%	1,12

3.4 International Collaborations

Unisa contributes to this through its Internationalisation Strategy, which tasks several organisational units within the university to cooperate in pursuing and maintaining international collaborations and partnerships. Within the Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation Portfolio, the Internationalisation Office of the Directorate: Research Support is responsible for drafting, implementing, and administering the university's new Research and Innovation Internationalisation and Collaborations Framework and Implementation Plan. The proportion of International Collaboration for all publications from 2019-2023 is shown below, retrieved from two different data sources, Figure 30 below displays data sourced from InCites, which compares Unisa to the global baseline and Figure 31 data retrieved from SciVal, which compares Unisa to the global and national baselines.

Figure 30: InCites – International Collaboration for Unisa vs Global Baseline, 2019-2023.
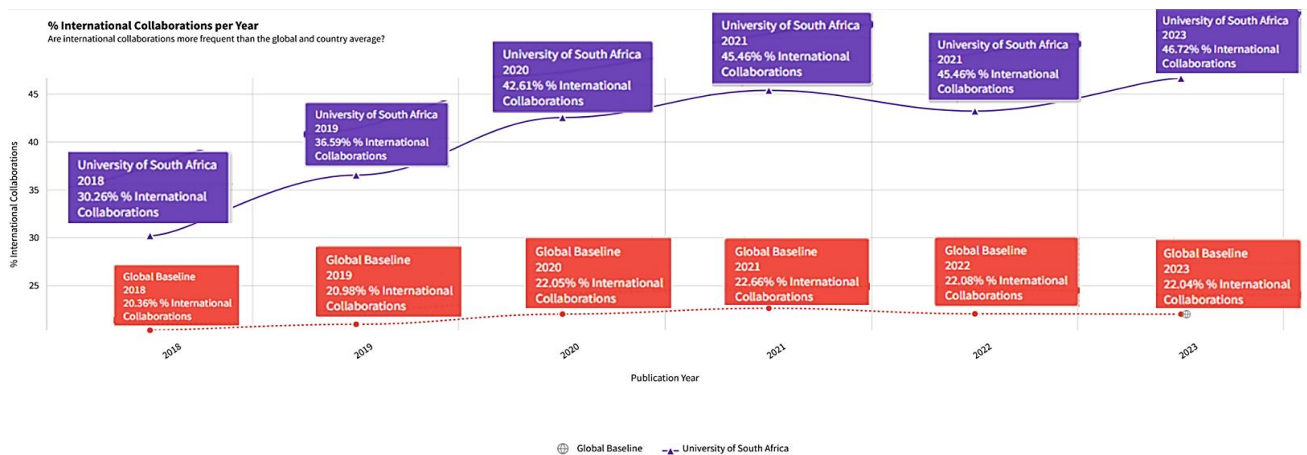

- Unisa has enhanced its international collaboration since 2019, demonstrating steady annual growth throughout the assessed period.

- Looking at InCites data, Unisa's proportion of international collaborations was above the global baseline for 2019-2023. For 2019, Unisa had 36,59% international collaborations, which increased to 45,46% for 2021 and 46,72% for 2023. Conversely, the global baseline fluctuated from 20,98% in 2019 to 22,66% in 2021 and 22,04% in 2023.

- Similarly, for SciVal, Unisa surpassed the global baseline between 2019 and 2023 but was below the national baseline. For 2019, Unisa had 34,3% international collaborations, compared to 20,5% for global and 48,8% for national. This increased to 41,8% for 2021, compared to 21,3% globally and 53,2% and 40,5% for 2023, compared to 21,1% and 52,7% globally and nationally, respectively.

Building, expanding, and encouraging research collaboration between South African and international scientists and scholars is a priority for South Africa, as outlined in the National System of Innovation, the National Internationalisation Strategy Framework, and the Collaboration Framework for the higher education sector, among others. The R&I Internationalisation and Collaboration Framework and Implementation Plan will guide Unisa in improving in this area.

Figure 31: SciVal – International Collaboration for Unisa vs Global and National Baseline, 2019-2023[5]
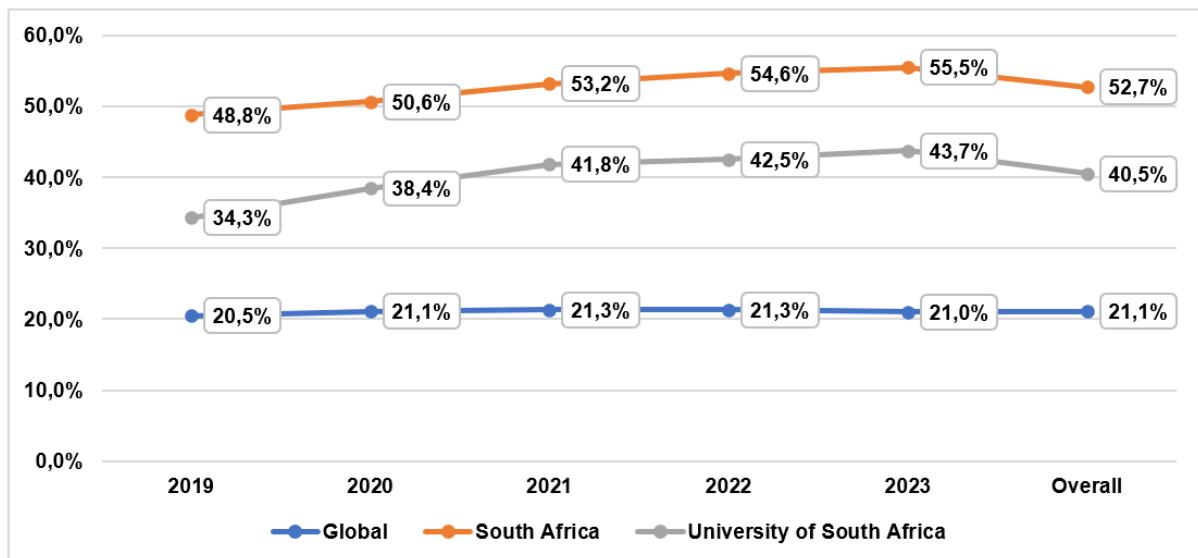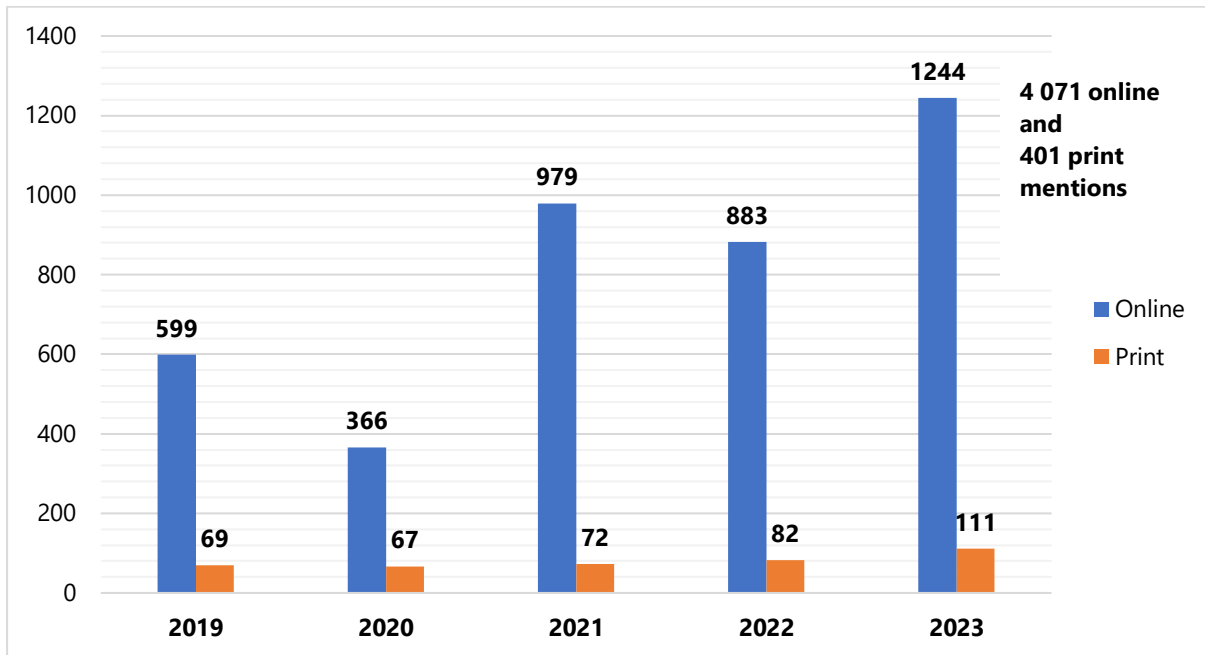

3.5   Media Mentions

A university's reputation is important, particularly due to its influence on the Time Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR), where research reputation contributes 18% of the institution's research environment performance indicator. Collected using THE's Academic Reputation Survey, research reputation measures a university's reputation for research excellence among its peers. Data from this survey is only accessible to the Times Higher Education data team, thus making it impossible for Unisa to monitor and analyse it.

As a result, Unisa uses SciVal's media metrics to determine Unisa's exposure. Figure 32 below provides the number of online and print media mentions received by Unisa overall and year-on-year for 2019 to 2023.

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[5] Recreated using SciVal data extracted 29/11/2024.

Figure 32: Unisa's SciVal online and print mass media mentions, 2019-2023[6]

- Unisa had 401 print media and 4 071 mass media mentions between 2019 and 2023. Its online media mentions increased by 107,7%, from 599 in 2019 to 1244 in 2023, and its print media mentions increased by 60,9%, from 69 to 111 for the same period.

- While the increase in media mentions is commendable, particularly online mentions, which increase its international exposure, not all mentions were positive[7], which could negatively impact the university's reputation, nationally and globally.

Table 23 below provides the Top 10 South African institutions regarding online media mentions.

Table 23: SciVal Top 10 institutions re: online media mentions, 2019-2023

Institution	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Overall
University of the Witwatersrand	5 824	9 761	13 134	10 059	7 575	46 353
University of Cape Town	6 793	8 003	9 816	10 127	10 736	45 475
Stellenbosch University	4 126	5 012	6 438	5 601	6 267	27 444
University of KwaZulu-Natal	2 036	2 471	6 339	5 172	3 364	19 382
University of Pretoria	2 645	2 611	4 216	3 511	3 992	16 975
University of Johannesburg	2 387	1 926	2 028	2 639	6 931	15 911
University of the Western Cape	1 524	1 221	1 431	1 403	1 550	7 129

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[6] Recreated using data extracted 29/11/2024.

[7] unisa in the news - Search News

Institution	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Overall
University of The Free State	697	1 015	1 064	1 452	1 402	5 630
North-West University	592	646	676	791	1 645	4 350
University of South Africa	599	366	979	883	1 244	4 071

- Unisa ranked 10th overall, including 2020 and 2023. For 2019 and 2021, it ranked 10th.
- The University of Witwatersrand (WITS) and the University of Cape Town (UCT), who ranked 1st and 3rd, had online media mentions of 46 353 and 45 475 for 2019-2023, respectively.

Table 24 below presents SciVal Top 10 institutions, re: print media mentions, 2019-2023.

Table 24: SciVal Top 10 institutions re: print media mentions, 2019-2023

|	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Overall
University of Cape Town	1 201	1 365	1 277	1 054	712	5 609
University of the Witwatersrand	1 011	1 163	1 446	987	607	5 214
Stellenbosch University	804	850	796	752	615	3 817
University of KwaZulu-Natal	477	636	694	586	428	2 821
University of Pretoria	497	531	484	427	373	2 312
University of Johannesburg	461	414	380	343	447	2 045
University of the Western Cape	272	253	231	209	158	1 123
North-West University	133	142	204	142	178	799
University of The Free State	149	167	155	158	104	733
University of South Africa	69	67	72	82	111	401

- Unisa remained 10th overall and for 2019 to 2022 and for 2023, Unisa ranked 9th.
- The University of Cape Town ranked first overall and for 2019-2022, whereas the University of the Witwatersrand ranked 2nd overall and, for 2019 to 2022.
- Stellenbosch University ranked 2nd for 2023, moving the University of the Witwatersrand to 3rd.

4   HIGH IMPACT JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

The High Impact Journal Framework was designed to assist researchers in identifying which journals have high impact scores within their disciplines. Figure 33 to Figure 35 below provide Unisa's publications in the top 1% and top 10% for SciVal and InCites for 2019-2023. It should be noted that SciVal and InCites use different metrics to analyse their journals and their

respective impacts. SciVal analysis is provided due to its impact on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

Figure 33: SciVal Publications in top journal percentiles, 2019-2023
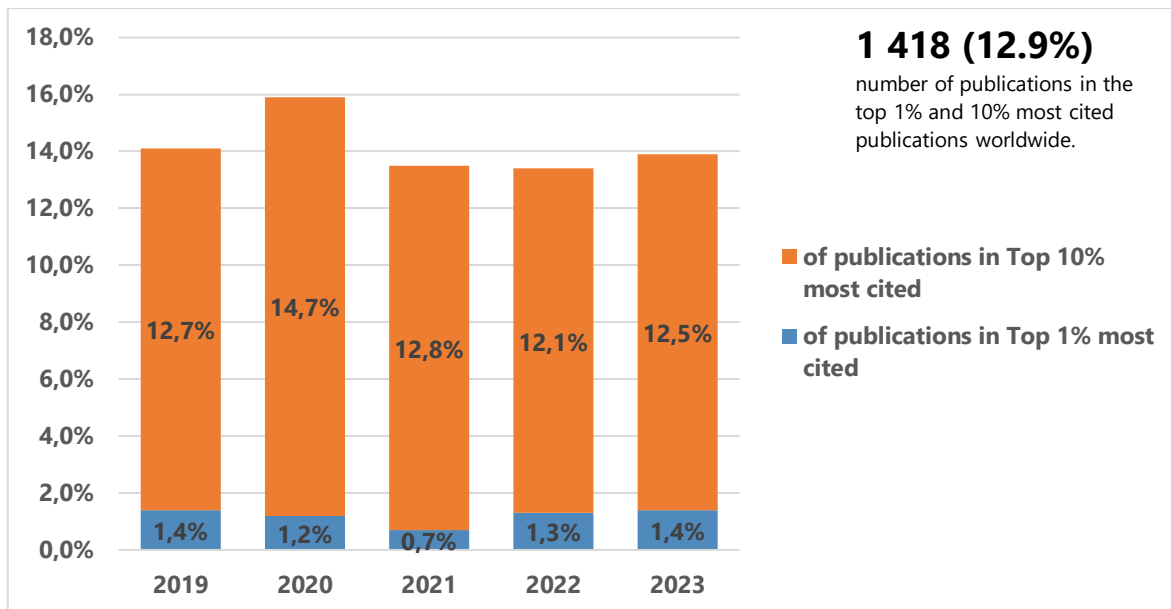
1 418 (12.9%)
number of publications in the top 1% and 10% most cited publications worldwide.

- of publications in Top 10% most cited
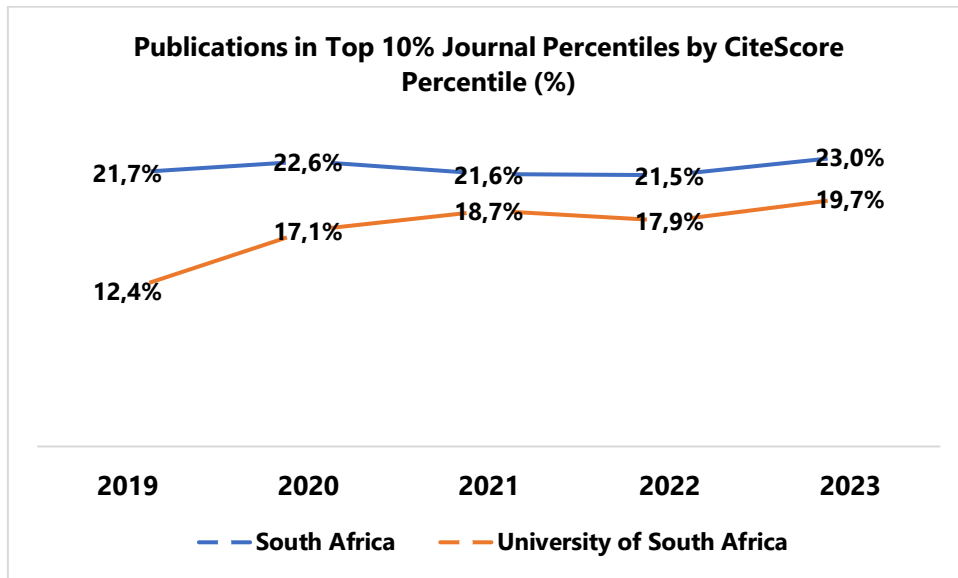- of publications in Top 1% most cited

- For 2019-2023, approximately 13% of Unisa's publications output were in the top 10% most cited SciVal (Scopus) indexed journals worldwide, a drop from the 16% achieved for 2018-2023.

- This is despite there being slightly more publications for 2018-2023, 1 418, compared to 2017-2022, 1 298. For 2023, 12,5% of Unisa's publications were in the top 10% of most cited publications and 1,4% in the top 1% cited.

Whilst this is an improvement from the 2022 figures of 12,1% and 1,3%, respectively, Unisa should strive to have at least 20% of its publications in the top 10% and 2% in the top 1%.

Benchmarking Unisa against South Africa's proportion of publications in the Top 10% for SciVal, as shown in Figure 34 below, indicates that not only was Unisa below the national benchmark for all the years under review, but there were fluctuations in its performance, with an upward trajectory from 2019-2021, followed by a dip in 2022 before recovering in 2023.

Figure 34: SciVal publications in Top 10% journals, 2019-2023

Publications in Top 10% Journal Percentiles by CiteScore Percentile (%)

21,7%   22,6%   21,6%   21,5%   23,0%

                17,1%   18,7%   17,9%   19,7%

12,4%

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |

– – South Africa   – – University of South Africa

- When benchmarking using InCites, although Unisa's performance is below the national benchmark, the gap is smaller than with SciVal.

Figure 35: InCites publications in Top 10% journals, 2019-2023.

Publications in Top 10% Journal Percentiles by CiteScore Percentile (%)-InCites

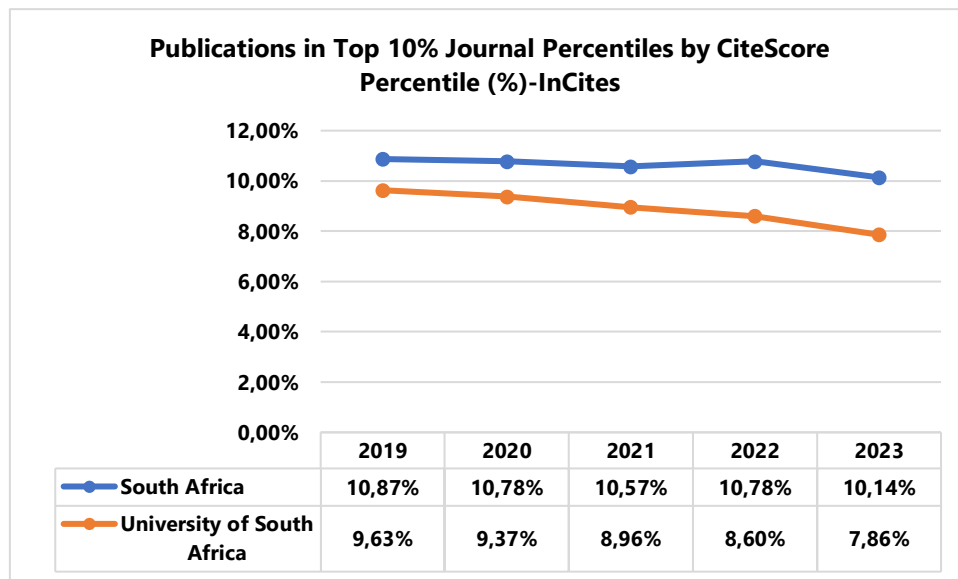|	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
South Africa	10,87%	10,78%	10,57%	10,78%	10,14%
University of South Africa	9,63%	9,37%	8,96%	8,60%	7,86%

Table 25 below, presents a comparison between SciVal and Incites regarding publications in the Top 1% and Top 10% for 2022 and 2023.

Table 25: SciVal vs. InCites publications in the Top 1% and Top 10%

	SciVal (Scopus)		InCites (WoS)	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
% of publications in the Top 1% most cited	1,3%	1,4%	1,10%	1,08%
% of publications in the Top 10% most cited	12,1%	12,5%	9,60%	9,36%

- There was a slight improvement for SciVal from 1,3% to 1,4% for the Top 1% and 12,1% to 12,5% for the Top 10%.

- Conversely, drops from 1,10% to 1,08% for the Top 1% and 9,60% to 9,36% for the Top 10% were experienced for InCites.

5   CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis highlighted some achievements and areas of improvement regarding Unisa's research impact. Firstly, looking at its performance in the Global Rankings:

- Unisa was one of the only two ODeL institutions and the only one of eight South African Universities in the **Academic Ranking of World Universities Ranking (ARWU)** of the Top 1 000 universities worldwide. Although Unisa was again in the 901-1000 band, 20th in the benchmark group, 19th in Africa and 8th nationally, there were some improvements in its Nature and Science, Publications, and per capita performance scores from 0,0 to 1,4, 9,7 to 10,5 and 9,7 to 10,5, respectively, from 2023 to 2024 while Awards and Highest citations remained unchanged, and Alumni declined marginally.

- Despite a slight decline in Unisa's overall score in the **Times Higher Education World University Rankings** (**THE WUR**), a trend observed in many regions, including South Africa, mainly regarding reputational aspects and industry interaction, Unisa's teaching reputation improved marginally. Also encouraging was that Unisa remained among the top universities in Africa and South Africa. When considering the performance of ODeL universities, it is insightful that the universities ahead of Unisa are mainly from Europe and the East, where universities generally perform better in the Research quality pillar as it includes citations. Although there are signs that Unisa is making progress in raising awareness of good research, this aspect remains challenging for universities from Africa

and other developing areas. It is positive that Unisa's performance in the Research quality replaced Research environment as the top pillar because it points to the fact that Unisa managed to maintain research quality despite a per capita decrease in government funding. However, this again highlights the necessity of enhancing industry collaboration. The decline in research productivity is understandable, given the focus on teaching and learning with the implementation of the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF) during the last five years. However, this will hopefully be a temporary situation that will improve.

- Unisa was 683rd out of 1 169 universities, 11th out of 45 African universities, and 1st among 2 ODeL universities for the **2024 Round University Ranking (RUR).**

- For the **2024-2025 US News Best Global Universities ranking**, Unisa was jointly 861st out of 2 250 universities, 37th among benchmark universities and 9th nationally. Moreover, Unisa was in the top half for research reputation (793), regional research reputation – Africa (23), publications (880), books (192), conferences (726), total citations (978), publications among the top 10% cited (992), international collaboration (879), papers among the top 10% most cited (1 080) with only % papers among the top 1% outside the top half (1 513).

- For the **2024 Centre for World University Ranking (CWUR),** Unisa was in the top 6,2% of the top 2000 universities of the 20 966 evaluated and 945th for employability.

- For the **SCImago Institutions Ranking (SIR),** Unisa placed 1 080th out of 4 762 units, 8th out of 23 universities in South Africa and 3rd out of 13 ODeL universities. Unisa also performed well to be in position 544 for societal impact and in the top half as in position in position 3 791 for research. For innovation Unisa was in the bottom half in position 7 598.

- For the **University Ranking of Academic Performance (URAP),** Unisa placed 970th out of the top 3000 universities, with scores for total documents and article impact in the top quartile worldwide and article citations, citation impact and collaboration in the top half globally.

- Regarding the **Times Higher Education Impact Rankings**, Unisa was in the top half worldwide in the 601-800 band out of 1 963 universities, with a score of 65,3, marginally lower than its 2023 score of 66,7: joint 6th among South African universities and 3rd among ODeL universities.

- o **For *SDG 4: Quality Education***: There was a decline in Unisa's score for SDG 4 Quality Education from 64,0 in 2023 to 61,6 in 2024, which placed it in the 401-600 band out of 1 681 universities worldwide for 2024 compared to 201-300 out of 1 304 universities in 2023. Nationally, Unisa ranked 4th among 7 South African Universities, with SDG4 being its third-best performing SDG. Research contributed considerably, with the score for the Research pillar just below the 75th percentile. Publications performed outstandingly to be equal to the top score worldwide; paper views and downloads were in the bottom half of the interquartile band, and CiteScore in the upper half of the interquartile band.

- o **For *SDG 5 Gender Equality***: This was again Unisa's best performing SDG, ranked in the 301-400 band out of 1 361 universities. Research again contributed significantly, with the score for the research pillar just below the 75th percentile. The score for female authors was just below the worldwide mean, with publications equal to the top score worldwide and CiteScore in the top half worldwide.

- o **The *SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation*** score was in the top half worldwide, and Unisa was ranked in the 401-600 band out of 807 universities. Research contributed significantly, with a score at the 75th percentile. Publications scored close to the top score worldwide; for CiteScore and FWCI, the scores were in the top half.

- o ***SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy*** also scored in the top half worldwide and was ranked in the 401-600 band out of 987 universities. The score for publications was in the top quartile worldwide, but the scores for CiteScore and FWCI were in the bottom half of the interquartile band.

- o **For *SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth***, a new entrant, Unisa, was ranked in the 401-600 band out of 1,149 universities. Research contributed strongly to this with a score just below the 75th percentile. Publications contributed strongly, equalling the top score; CiteScore was just below the median, and FWCI was in the upper half of the interquartile band.

- o **For *SDG 10, Reduced inequalities***, Unisa scored in the top half worldwide and ranked in the 401-600 band out of 1 108 universities. Research contributed strongly with a score just below the 75th percentile, mainly from publications equalling the top score, CiteScore just below the median and FWCI in the upper half of the interquartile band.

- o **For *SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*,** another new entrant, Unisa, performed well to be ranked in the 401-600 band out of 1 086 universities. This is now our second-strongest SDG. Research contributed well, with a score in the upper half worldwide. Publications also equalled the top score, and the CiteScore and FWCI scores were just below the median.

- o Lastly, ***SDG 16 Partnerships for the Goals*** was ranked in the 801-1000 band out of 2 031 universities. Research contributed very strongly with a score close to the top score, with the proportion of output co-authored with low or low-middle income counties and publications scoring close to the top scores worldwide.

Overall, Unisa performed well in the global rankings and some aspects were highlighted. It is positive that in terms of the number of publications, Unisa is performing well, especially for publications related to sustainability, where the university is performing exceptionally well. Unisa is doing very well regarding the proportion of articles co-authored with researchers from low and low-middle-income countries. However, although just below the median, we need to increase the proportion of female publications. However, raising awareness worldwide about this research remains challenging, confirmed by lower scores for views and downloads and citation statistics. Specifically, Unisa performed excellently regarding societal issues, also evidenced by the strong performances in the THE IR. Unfortunately, research funding remains a challenge, especially research from industry should be enhanced through more research collaboration.

Regarding national (DHET) ranking, improvements need to be made to Unisa's publication output to move it out of the 8th position it has been stuck at since 2017, which can then improve its per capita research publications output, currently sitting at 11th place. Improvement was noted regarding its awarded creative output units, moving it from 6th to 5th place between 2021 and 2022, whereas it retained 4th place relative to the sector for innovations output units, despite being awarded 54,5% fewer innovations output for 2022 compared to 2021.

Looking at its publications per catalytic niche area, while 54,4% of its 2023 publications had been categorised according to CNA, a worrying 43,6% were classified as other and 2,1% as unknown. This suggests the College of Graduate Studies must intensify efforts to ensure

institution-wide understanding and buy-in into all the CNAs. Most of the 2023 publications were categorised as Natural Sciences (Biotechnological Studies), followed by 4IR and Health Studies.

Regarding media mentions, while there were increases in Unisa's online and print media coverage, efforts need to be made to minimise instances of bad publicity, which can negatively affect Unisa's reputation.

Unisa's scores for international collaborations were above the global but below the national benchmark, thus requiring improvement.

Improvements regarding publications in the top 10% of journals are also required, where Unisa is currently ranked below the national benchmark. This is particularly important as having a higher proportion of publications in the top 10% of journals seems to positively influence the CNCI and FWCI scores.

Summary of Key Actions to be undertaken:

a) Enhance publication outputs to improve Unisa's position in DHET rankings and per capita research publications output.

b) Focus on publishing in top-tier journals to increase the proportion of publications in the top 10% and improve CNCI and FWCI scores.

c) Strengthen research funding, especially through industry collaboration, to sustain and enhance research quality and productivity.

d) Raise awareness globally about Unisa's research through strategic dissemination, including targeted efforts to improve views, downloads, and citation statistics.

e) Intensify efforts by the College of Graduate Studies to ensure university-wide understanding and adoption of CNAs.

f) Expand focus areas beyond Natural Sciences, 4IR, and Health Studies to ensure balanced representation across all CNAs.

g) Improve the quality and quantity of international collaborations, especially with low- and low-middle-income countries, to enhance Unisa's global research impact.

h) Foster partnerships with leading global institutions in Africa, Europe, and the East to learn and adapt best practices in research quality.

i) Mitigate instances of bad publicity through proactive media engagement and reputation management strategies.

j) Leverage online and print media to amplify Unisa's global and national achievements.

k) Develop strategies to improve performance in SDG-related activities, especially in areas where scores have declined, such as SDG 4 (Quality Education).

l) Address the decline in innovation output units by fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

m) Regularly monitor and benchmark Unisa's performance against national and global peers, focusing on the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), THE WUR, US News, and SCImago rankings.

n) Identify and address gaps in key performance areas, including per capita scores, teaching reputation, and publications.