UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Annual Performance Plan

2026–2028

Inspiring excellence, transforming lives through quality, impact, and care.

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA

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Introduction

In September 2022, the Council of the University of the Free State (UFS) adopted Vision 130, which sets out the university's strategic intent to reposition the institution towards 2034. Vision 130 commits the university to strengthening its reputation among its peers and society as a university of excellence. It states that the UFS's ultimate intent is to be acknowledged as a university that meaningfully supports responsible societal development, thus aspiring for maximum societal impact. This commitment to societal impact will require a purpose-driven focus on relevant and cutting-edge research as well as the preparation of globally competitive graduates who understand the local context, with the appropriate attributes, skills, and knowledge to enable them to stand out, enter the economy, shape society, and become good citizens, future leaders, and stewards of the environment.

Global research is increasingly characterised by strong and large research collaborations. Complex problems faced by societies locally and globally also require multi- and transdisciplinary teams. This necessitates work across academic departments, faculties, and other national and international research groups to produce research outputs with internationally benchmarked knowledge and societal impact and recognition, resulting in international subject field leadership.

While aspiring to be research-led, the UFS will continue to enhance its undergraduate teaching and learning activities, specifically focusing on student success and life-changing educational opportunities from undergraduate to doctoral levels across various disciplines and fields of study.

This planning cycle builds on achievements over the past three years, taking stock of what has become operational and resetting the strategic priorities needed to create meaningful and sustainable change over this planning period. The UFS Strategic Plan 2023 to 2028 sets out the goals, objectives, and aspirations that have been disaggregated into activities and measurable performance indicators in this second three-year rolling Annual Performance Plan (APP).

The three-year rolling Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2026-2028 allows the University to prioritise its choices towards shaping the kind of university encapsulated in its Vision 130 and Strategic Plan 2023-2028. To this end, these priorities have been delineated in the following five goals:

Goal 1: *Improve our academic excellence, reputation, and impact.*

Goal 2: *Promote an environment of agility, flexibility, and responsiveness based on trust and accountability.*

Goal 3: *Advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS.*

Goal 4: *Promote stewardship and the prioritisation of institutional resources for strategic intent.*

Goal 5: *Establish Collaborative Innovation and Global Integration.*

These goals have been translated into objectives, activities, and key performance indicators demonstrating our priorities for the next three years.

Strategic Plan 2023-2028

These goals have been translated into objectives, activities, and key performance indicators, demonstrating our priorities for the next three years.

Vision 130

The UFS aspires to be an innovative research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged university that contributes meaningfully to responsible societal futures.

Mission

The university will generate and impart new knowledge that advances innovative and sustainable solutions to inform society's contemporary and future progress.

Values

The UFS subscribes to values that shape and inform our culture and provide a framework for our actions and decisions. Our values are realised through the conduct of the wider university community and include the following:

- Excellence
- Accountability
- Social justice
- Impact
- Care
- Sustainability

Vision	The UFS aspires to be an innovative research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged university that contributes meaningfully to responsible societal futures.				
Mission	The university will generate and impart new knowledge that advances innovative and sustainable solutions to inform society's contemporary and future progress.				
Goals	**1.** Improve our academic excellence, reputation, and impact.	**2.** Promote an environment of agility, flexibility, and responsiveness based on trust and accountability.	**3.** Advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS.	**4.** Promote stewardship and prioritisation of institutional resources for strategic intent.	**5.** Establish collaborative innovation and global integration.
Objectives	**1.1:** Increase impactful, collaborative research that addresses societal challenges, leverages digital innovation, and aligns with the SDGs, positioning the UFS as a national and global leader. **1.2:** Increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of academic staff with a renowned global reputation, supported by targeted recruitment, professional development, and competitive retention strategies. **1.3:** Deliver academic offerings and practices that produce graduates who are highly employable, digitally literate, and equipped to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.	**2.1:** Streamline, digitise, and continuously improve policies, systems, and processes to drive efficiency and responsiveness. **2.2:** Establish academic structures and leadership capacity that foster cross-functional collaboration, agility, and effective decision-making. **2.3:** Leverage digital technologies, business intelligence, AI and data analytics to enable evidence-based decision-making, continuous improvement, and institutional agility.	**3.1:** Create an inclusive, supportive environment for constructive engagement, well-being, and continuous measurement of cultural transformation. **3.2:** Become an institution of choice for exceptional students, academics, and support staff, through a values-driven culture and competitive opportunities for growth and recognition. **3.3:** Become a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and supporting holistic development. **3.4:** Improve the equity profile of academic leadership through targeted recruitment, systematic monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.	**4.1:** Optimise professional and support structures through digital transformation, process automation, and regular review. **4.2:** Deploy the principles of resource investment to enable academic excellence, with particular emphasis on research, postgraduate studies, and sustainable innovation infrastructure. **4.3:** Increase our research and innovation competitiveness by diversifying revenue streams, strengthening partnerships, and commercialising intellectual property. **4.4:** Review and align academic programmes and support systems regularly to maximise efficiency and relevance to market and societal needs.	**5.1:** Break down artificial barriers between disciplines, institutions, and sectors to foster groundbreaking discoveries at the intersection of disciplines. **5.2:** Develop UFS as an Innovation Hub and true Innovative Entrepreneurial Knowledge Ecosystem, thriving on creative synergy across three campuses. **5.3:** Create dynamic spaces where students tackle society's most complex challenges and learn to direct questions, and ensure AI serves humanity's highest aspirations.
Values	Excellence	Innovation and impact	Accountability	Care	Social Justice	Sustainability

Figure 1: UFS Strategic Plan 2026–2028

Goals and objectives

For this planning cycle, 2026 to 2028, the strategic focus is on excellence, visibility, and impact, building on the fundamentals established during the past three years. This will involve promoting multi-disciplinarity and concomitant policies, as well as implementing the relevant systems and processes to facilitate impact and enhance our reputation. Ethical and empowering leadership will continue to be a focus to ensure that the university culture becomes more facilitative of excellence and the Academic Project.

Emphasis will also be placed on freeing up resources to reinvest in research and innovation. This will require reviewing the efficiency of academic programmes, reviewing the academic and support structures, and investing in academic leaders and managers to facilitate and enable this new direction.

In a complex and rapidly changing landscape, it is important to emphasise that prioritising our objectives and activities allows for an adaptive strategy implementation approach that highlights learning and agility. The APP is our road map for navigating our choices, the actions we prioritise, and the investments we make. Furthermore, the APP aims to create a familial atmosphere where everyone works together and understands their role. It endeavours to build an inclusive performance culture that is both professed and actioned.

Against this backdrop, the UFS has judiciously selected a limited number of key performance indicators (KPIs) explicitly linked to each of its strategic objectives (see Table 1). KPIs are quantitative values that monitor and elucidate the quality and effectiveness of the institution and its progress towards achieving its stated objectives. The KPIs and secondary performance indicators will form the basis of the periodic formative evaluation of its strategic plan, aimed at identifying opportunities and informing decisions about required changes throughout the implementation process.

Furthermore, each objective is informed by several carefully selected activities (see Table 1). These activities are used as a steering mechanism and will allow flexibility in addressing the complex nature of the changing landscape. It allows the university to reflect annually and add activities as and when needed.

Integrated planning

Integrated planning will assist the UFS in achieving its mission more effectively. It creates consensus regarding the priorities listed in Figure 2 below and moves the entire University towards the same vision. Furthermore, integrated planning must ensure that each objective has the necessary resources to be achieved and that our efforts will be measured so that activities can be aligned. It aims to assist portfolios in coordinating their activities across divisions and create more efficiency. Therefore, this framework for strategic planning outlines the key concepts that will underscore Vision 130. The framework recognises that the UFS is unique, and some goals may relate to short-term social or economic challenges, while others extend to six years and beyond.

The framework furthermore aims to demonstrate that our aspirational goals, as presented in Strategic Plan 2023-2028 and Annual Performance Plan 2026-2028 – as a contract with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation – play a constructive role in clarifying the strategic direction and relationship between the different layers of planning and broader policy goals.

To promote an integrated and inclusive planning and reporting culture, the framework makes provision for risk management, monitoring and evaluation, and performance contracting, underscoring levels of combined assurance.

Ultimately, the aim of the framework is to ensure that all planned activities steer and direct the institution towards achieving its vision in a synchronised and well-planned manner.

After a high-level risk assessment of the current institutional risks after three years of implementing the current strategy, alignment with Vision 130 and the Strategic Plan 2023 to 2028 was conducted. The UFS risk philosophy enables risk identification on a strategic and operational level, as well as annual revision in pursuit of the university's strategic objectives.

The UFS strategic management process is a key driver in instilling a culture of outward thinking and promoting an approach of bringing people together to voice their thoughts, creative ideas, and strategies to give expression to Vision 130. This will ultimately lead to a level of integration, both structurally and collaboratively, through interdisciplinary teams. This will promote cross-portfolio collaboration on the execution of institution-wide strategic projects to achieve the desired outcomes.

Strategic vision – twelve years	Vision 130: The UFS aspires to be an innovative research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged university that contributes meaningfully to responsible societal futures.											
Strategic planning – six years	Mission: The university will generate and impart new knowledge that advances innovative and sustainable solutions to inform society's contemporary and future progress.											
	Strategic Plan 2023-2028						Strategic Plan 2029-2034					
Evaluation and review – three years	Formative Review 2025			Summative Review 2028			Formative Review 2031			Summative Review 2034		
Performance planning – three-year rolling	Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2023-2025			APP 2026-2028			APP 2029-2031			APP 2032-2034		
	Portfolio APP 2023-2025			Portfolio APP 2026-2028			Portfolio APP 2029-2031			Portfolio APP 2032-2034		
	Faculty and support APP 2023-2025			Faculty and support APP 2026-2028			Faculty and support APP 2029-2031			Faculty and support APP 2032-2034		
Risk management – three-year rolling	Institutional Risk Register (IRR) 2023-2025			IRR 2026-2028			IRR 2029-2031			IRR 2032-2034		
	Portfolio Risk Register (PRR) 2023-2025			PRR 2026-2028			PRR 2026-2028			PRR 2026-2028		
Strategic resourcing – three-year rolling	Strategic Resource Plan 2023-2025			Strategic Resource Plan 2026-2028			Strategic Resource Plan 2029-2031			Strategic Resource Plan 2032-2034		
Budgeting – annual	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Staff performance contracting – annual	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Monitoring and reporting – bi-annual	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025

Figure 2: UFS Integrated Reporting 2023-2034

Annual Performance Plan 2026–2028

The 2026-2028 three-year rolling UFS Annual Performance Plan (APP), as presented below, has been prepared according to the requirements set out in the Regulations for Annual Reporting by Higher Education Institutions (Government Gazette No. 37726, 9 June 2014) and sets out the university's intentions. The UFS deliberately opted for a three-year rolling APP to provide stability in the planning and reporting cycle and to ensure that it acts as a vehicle to measure the achievements of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

The UFS conducted a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028 to revise its three-year plan, as submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in December 2022. The developed APP 2026-2028 reflects both changes in its strategic priorities for 2026–2028 and its progress against selected KPIs and planned activities. Aligned with Vision 130, the UFS has identified the following five strategic drivers for 2026:

1. *Successful transition of students from under- to postgraduate studies.*
2. *Growth in postgraduate student enrolments.*
3. *Growth in research supervisory capacity.*
4. *Integrated resourcing.*
5. *Growth of high-impact, strategic alliances.*

These drivers demonstrate the university's commitment to the expansion of its research enterprise, focusing on research education at the postgraduate level, research resourcing, and partnerships for impact in 2026.

Strategic performance indicators, targets, and activities

Table 1 below outlines the institutional KPIs and activities, illustrating the alignment between the 25 defined KPIs and activities and the five goals and 17 objectives of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028. The narrative below explains these links/relationships and confirms the relevance of the KPIs and planned activities to the strategic intent of the UFS.

The SMART concept (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) was applied in selecting the KPIs, to ensure that the most significant, relevant, and representative indicators are monitored. In addition, the UFS will track a range of secondary performance indicators linked to projects and activities as part of its performance monitoring system to ensure that it remains on course to achieve its objectives at the operational level. The KPI target-setting included long-term targets (up to 2034) and was decided through peer benchmarking, not forecasting. The UFS intends to impact, rather than follow, historical trends in this KPI data to reach its goal of being ranked among the top institutions worldwide. The technical indicator descriptions (TDI) will be developed to support the consistent application and monitoring of the indicators during the reporting period.

The planned activities provide detail for implementing the APP 2026-2028 by identifying a specific initiative and allocating it to an accountable Deputy Vice-Chancellor portfolio or University Executive Committee (EXCO) member. These activities are not exhaustive, and the accountable portfolios will elaborate and add to them as required in their portfolio plans and performance agreement with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal. Therefore, the planned activities included in the APP represent only the key initiatives required to move the UFS towards achieving each objective over time.

Goal 1:

Improve our academic excellence, reputation, and impact.

Objective 1.1: *Increase impactful, collaborative research that addresses societal challenges, leverages digital innovation, and aligns with the SDGs, positioning the UFS as a national and global leader.*

The UFS selected one KPI to monitor its progress towards achieving Objective 1.1. The KPI is quantitative and tracks the number of publications in Q1 and Q2 ranked journals. Through this KPI, the UFS monitors the impact of its research outputs on society through high impact publications. The UFS' target for the KPI is to radically increase journal publications in high impact journals by 2028 and improve its research reputation year-on-year.

Indicator 1.1.1 (see Table 1) measures the total number of research outputs at UFS that are published in high impact journals. A review of the 2024 and 2025 performance indicates that citation rate as a measure does not provide an accurate measure of the impact of research outputs from the UFS. The current method of calculating the citation rate favours a reporting of historical performance, rather than current, as citations tend to increase over time; thus, precludes current and potential future performance of recent publications. As a result, the KPI has been revised for 2026, 2027 and 2028. This KPI is revised to UFS publications in Q1 and Q2 ranked journals as a share of total publications at UFS. The baseline is set at 59% and considering historical performance data trends, year on year target increases have been set in a range of 3% to 5% (see Table 1).

To achieve Objective 1.1, the UFS is undertaking three strategic activities over the three-year period of the APP: Firstly, it is monitoring the effective implementation of the new funding modality for resourcing the research enterprise. This entails monitoring innovation in its budgeting process to ensure the seamless alignment of institutional resource allocation with the strategic intent of the university. Secondly, it is monitoring the effective implementation of faculty research agendas and the focus on SDGs and high-impact, to ensure that the research it undertakes advances societal and knowledge impact. Thirdly, the consolidated UFS Strategic Fund to serve transdisciplinary research was established. This will ensure that there is funding available for transdisciplinary research across the institution. Accountability for these activities is assigned to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation.

Objective 1.2: *Increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of academic staff with a renowned global reputation, supported by targeted recruitment, professional development, and competitive retention strategies.*

The UFS monitors three quantitative KPIs in terms of Objective 1.2. It measures the global renown of its academics by tracking staff's rate of co-publication with international collaborators, and the share of its academic staff complement with an international reputation (where the NRF rating is utilised as a proxy indicator of the reputation of UFS scholars). Indicator 1.2.1 reflects the international reputation of UFS academics. The UFS also tracks the research outputs (master's and doctoral supervision to graduation and research publications) of its staff as an indicator of the research activity of its academics (research active academics) through KPI 1.2.2, Research active, and 1.2.3

Co-publication. The long- term targets for these KPIs remain set to increase co-publication to more than half of the scholarly output by 2028 increase international research leaders to 20% of staff by 2034, and to increase research outputs, for example, to one research publication per academic staff member by 2034 and ensure that all permanent academic staff are research active.

Indicator 1.2.1 measures the total number of UFS researchers who are considered research leaders as a share of permanent academic staff. This is calculated by the number of academic staff with NRF ratings A, B and P as a share of permanent academic staff at the UFS. The baseline for this KPI has been revised to 4%. A review of this KPI for 2022,2023, 2024 and the 2025 mid-year report indicates that, at the current rate, the target of 6% will not be achieved; the growth trend varies between 0.6% to 0.8% year-on-year. Strategies to improve this growth trend to 1.5% - 2% per annum will be employed to improve performance.

Indicator 1.2.3 has been revised from 'Number of academic staff who authored an accredited publication output as a share of permanent academic staff' to 'Permanent academic staff who are research active as a share of total active permanent academic staff at the UFS'. Although performance in this KPI is commendable, it measures the research performance of UFS staff with regard to publications, precluding research contributions in the form of postgraduate completions of Masters and Doctoral students. Therefore, this KPI will also include a measure of academic staff who not only publish research but also contribute to the success of postgraduate students.

The university is adopting a two-pronged approach to this objective – firstly, by increasing the number of leading scholars currently employed at the institution, and secondly, by establishing relationships with, attracting, and retaining new leading scholars from across the globe. To this end, the UFS is reviewing and redesigning its institutional academic staff development initiatives and monitoring effective implementation of the Grow-Your-Own-Timber project, looking inward to its established, new, and potential (e.g., postdoctoral fellows) academic staff members. The Talent Management Strategy, as well as the VC Talent Management Fund, was designed to support human resource policies on academic staff recruitment, employment, and reward, and it is outward-looking, focusing on external, globally renowned scholars. In addition, activities related to the UFS's national and international footprint, co-funded research opportunities, and existing and new global strategic partnerships will establish a formal and long-term association between such scholars and the university.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations.

Objective 1.3: *Deliver academic offerings and practices that produce graduates who are highly employable, digitally literate, and equipped to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.*

The perceived desirability of UFS graduates serves as a quantitative KPI for Objective 1.3 and is measured through a UFS Graduate Exit Survey. Desirable graduates are sought-after graduates in the labour market, given their potential to significantly impact future employers. They are also sought after as future postgraduate students with high potential to impact the knowledge environment.

Indicator 1.3.1 measures postgraduate enrolments as a share of total enrolments under this objective, given that postgraduate students are more employable and likely to

succeed in further studies. The UFS targets an increase in postgraduate enrolments to 30% of total enrolments by 2034 (i.e., to achieve a 30:70 ratio between post- and undergraduate enrolments). In the period under review, the UFS plans to increase a share of postgraduate enrolments from the baseline of 17% in 2025 to 23% by 2028, while indicator 1.3.2 monitors the share of undergraduate graduates through the UFS Graduate Exit Survey. The responses of graduates are generated at least six months after graduation to have an institutional view of those with employment offers. The 2024 graduate cohort preliminary results are very positive, even though the response rates were relatively low. The baseline and 2026 target was therefore set lower than the survey results, at 32%, with an average annual increase of 2% thereafter. The survey will again be conducted during 2025 and 2026 since reporting is done using n−1 graduates' data.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation are accountable for four activities under Objective 1.3: The UFS is strengthening its academic advisory boards in all faculties and building new industry-faculty collaborations to promote curriculum relevance and impact; re-engineering curriculum processes to fully exploit opportunities presented by new advanced technologies; reviewing how faculties support the transition from under- to postgraduate level and prepare students for higher degree studies; providing more support to expand the Centre for Digital Futures; and monitor implementation of the graduate attributes.

Goal 2:

Promote an environment of agility, flexibility, and responsiveness based on trust and accountability

Objective 2.1: *Streamline, digitise, and continuously improve policies, systems, and processes to drive efficiency and responsiveness.*

KPI (2.1.1) will monitor the level of technology adaptation in decision making processes across the institution, and the usage of digital signatures will be used as one important indicator. The UFS will monitor this objective through the following activities: reviewing business processes at the UFS (including the delegation of authority) to reduce delays; developing an enhanced workflows and dependencies implementation plan; increasing cross-departmental collaboration through enhanced workflows and dependencies; developing and implementing a change management strategy; and developing and implementing an Integrated Bursaries Framework. The activities should improve our decision-making arrangements and reduce siloed practices to ultimately improve our performance. This is very difficult to measure and will therefore be monitored both; quantitatively and qualitatively.

Accountability for these activities resides with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations.

Objective 2.2: *Establish academic structures and leadership capacity that foster cross-functional collaboration, agility, and effective decision-making.*

One quantitative KPI is applied to monitor progress towards Objective 2.2. Academic management and leadership capacity are measured as the share of academic department heads who are members of the professoriate (see KPI 2.2.1 in Table 1). The

baseline is set at 61% and improvement projected at 3% year-on-year. The longer-term target to increase the share of these department heads who are part of the professoriate has been revised to a more realistic target of 70% (from 75%) by 2028. However, the institution is committed to improve in relation to this KPI.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic is accountable for developing a set of principles to establish academic departments, reviewing and realigning faculty structures, and implementing new structures. The Registrar is responsible for reviewing the university governance framework to promote clear decision-making protocols, and transparent reporting mechanisms across all academic and administrative units.

Objective 2.3: *Leverage digital technologies, business intelligence, AI, and data analytics to enable evidence-based decision-making, continuous improvement, and institutional agility.*

The utilisation of business intelligence (BI) platforms by staff members across the UFS is monitored as KPI for Objective 2.3. The target for this KPI was to double the share of these staff members who access BI platforms by 2025. However, based on the lower-than- expected 2023 and 2024 results and the introduction of PowerBI to be used together with the PowerHeda platform, the KPI has been revised to instead start off by monitoring general access, and based on that data it will be revised in the future to target specific areas or staff categories for improvement. Therefore, the baseline has been set at 29%, and access is planned to improve up to 52% by 2028.

The UFS intends to achieve this objective by implementing a fully-fledged BI system, framework and platform, developing the requisite capacities to promote data analytics, monitor user experience, and update the system as needed. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategic Initiatives, International and Institutional Affairs are accountable for the activities.

Goal 3:

Advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS

Objective 3.1: *Create an inclusive, supportive environment for constructive engagement, well-being, and continuous measurement of cultural transformation.*

Objective 3.1 is monitored through two quantitative KPIs concerning staff and student experience. The Thomas International staff engagement survey measures staff members' experience of engagement in the UFS environment, while the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) measures students' experience of advanced student-lecturer engagement. The target for staff experience is a year-on-year improvement, and for student experience to have at least a third of the students reporting advanced forms of interaction with lecturers by 2034.

The staff experience of engagement in the workplace is meant to monitor improvement by focusing on relationships, roles and rewards in the work environment. The survey is conducted annually by Thomas International. Since the survey was not conducted in 2023 and 2024, we have considered survey responses in 2021 and 2022 to calculate a baseline of 69%. The KPI will monitor the percentage of respondents who report satisfaction with their staff engagement and a conservative year-on-year improvement (2026 to 2028) to be calculated at 2%.

Indicator 3.1.1 has been revised from the unrealistic targets set from the 2023-2025 APP. The higher education environment is facing disruptions internationally and as a result, challenges related to student engagement are a global phenomenon. National data shows a down wards trend, while institutionally, the UFS is implementing staff rationalisation initiatives which have impacted negatively on academic staff's available time, as they have to take on additional work previously done by support staff. Hence, the baseline has been revised to use 25%, which was the UFS's performance in the latest available SASSE data for 2024, and year-on-year targets have been set at 26%, 28%, and 30%. It is important to highlight that the new LMS system, once approved, has the potential to improve student-lecturer engagement.

Six high-level activities assist the UFS in achieving this objective. These activities are divided among four accountable members of the executive management, namely, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic; Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations; Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategic Initiatives, International and Institutional Affairs; and Registrar.

Objective 3.2: *Become an institution of choice for exceptional students, academics, and support staff, through a values-driven culture and competitive opportunities for growth and recognition.*

Three quantitative KPIs are used to track progress towards Objective 3.2. KPI 3.2.1 monitors the share of permanent academic staff from historically marginalised demographics, to monitor improvements in the current academic staff distribution imbalance and increase the number of Indian, Coloured and African academics. The baseline is set at 46%, and annual targets have been set below 4%.

The UFS monitors the increase in permanent academic staff with doctorate degrees as KPI 3.2.2. Building on the positive work done in the 2023-2025 APP, the baseline is set at 60% using the 2025 mid-year actuals.

The esteem of the UFS among exceptional students is monitored quantitatively by measuring the share of first-year students with a high admission point score (APS). The baseline is set at 38% building on the positive work done through the 2023-2025 APP. The year-on-year target is set at 5% for KPI 3.2.3.

The UFS targets year-on-year improvement in the share of stakeholders who consider the UFS to be an institution of choice, increasing the share of first-year students with an APS of 35 and above to 50% by 2028.

The UFS will achieve this objective by reviewing the marketing and communication approach to position the UFS in line with Vision 130; reviewing and implementing the student recruitment strategy to recruit top matriculants and graduate students, implementing initiatives to increase academics from historically disadvantaged demographics; employing and promoting a diverse and talented academic staff complement prioritising staff with doctorates; establishing and promoting staff engagement sessions to promote an inclusive and vibrant work ethos; and reviewing and implementing the student recruitment and admission strategy to recruit top matriculants and graduate students, for which the Executive Director: Advancement is accountable. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic is steering the activity of employing and promoting a diverse and talented academic staff complement (prioritising staff with doctorates); while the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations is accountable for recruiting and retaining a support staff complement that supports the Academic Project. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate

Studies and Innovation also contribute to the employing and promoting a diverse and talented academic staff complement prioritising staff with doctorates.

Objective 3.3:	*Become a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and supporting holistic development.*

The UFS has selected two KPIs to monitor Objective 3.3. The first qualitative KPI measures student satisfaction with residence life through the Student Experience Survey. The residence life theme covers responses on awareness of programmes, participation in these programmes and the relevance of the programmes. The baseline is set at 30% using the 2024 data. The UFS commits to a longer-term target to increase student satisfaction to more than 75% by 2034.

Regarding planned activities, the Executive Director: Student Affairs, Sport, Arts and Culture is accountable for reviewing student accommodation and student life with regard to the Colleges framework to improve the students' lived experience and residences as academic spaces. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategic Initiatives, International and Institutional Affairs will champion the socialisation of social justices as a core institutional value and major pillar of a transforming university.

Objective 3.4:	*Improve the equity profile of academic leadership through targeted recruitment, systematic monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.*

The KPI monitoring progress towards Objective 3.4 is quantitative and includes measuring the share of the professoriate who are female. The UFS is aiming for an increase in females to 50% of the professoriate by 2034.

Recruiting, developing, and maintaining academic staff members from designated groups through a headhunting strategy and creating additional opportunities to promote academic staff from designated groups (women in particular) will aim to move the UFS closer to this objective. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations are accountable for this activity.

Goal 4:

Promote stewardship and the prioritisation of institutional resources for strategic intent

Objective: 4.1:	*Optimise professional and support structures through digital transformation, process automation, and regular review.*

While a clear data point has not been identified, the activities that should be implemented to achieve this objective include monitoring digitalisation initiatives across the institution, which will also inform the KPI, and implementing institutional awareness of digitalisation initiatives. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations is accountable for this activity.

Objective 4.2: *Deploy the principles of resource investment to enable academic excellence, with particular emphasis on research, postgraduate studies, and sustainable innovation infrastructure.*

KPI (4.1.1) will monitor this objective focusing on the implementation of major institutional projects promoting the latest technological adaptation. We are in the process of deploying information technology systems and software applications such as the Learning Management System. This objective requires effective implementation and monitoring. This is part of the broader institutional agenda of implementing digitalisation initiatives across the institution to complement the core institutional digital systems and platforms.

KPI (4.2.1) monitors postgraduate student experience of services and support provided by the UFS. The focus is to understand how students experience the various initiatives. The main activity for realising this objective is to ensure investment in infrastructure and relevant technologies to create an enabling environment to function optimally across all campuses, embracing the fact that we are one university with three campuses. Particular attention will be paid to the necessary infrastructure and technologies required at the Qwaqwa and South campuses to attract and retain exceptional students and academic staff.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation are accountable for the planned activities.

Objective 4.3: *Increase our research and innovation competitiveness by diversifying revenue streams, strengthening partnerships, and commercialising intellectual property.*

The share of income originating from the research endeavour is measured as a KPI for Objective 4.3. KPI 4.3.1 (Research income as a share of total income) builds on the positive work done in the 2023-2025 APP. The calculation captures third-stream income as generated income from research output block grant, earmarked grants for research, and contracts for research and clinical research activities, as a share of the grand total income of the Group. Using performance progress data, the baseline is set at 8% and 2% year-on-year increase. The KPI 4.3.2 monitors the number of distinct research-derived outputs that reach formal external utilisation or market-readiness. Using performance trend data, the baseline is set at 2 outputs and growth projected at the same level from 2026 to 2028. KPI 4.3.3 monitors income from donations and philanthropy across the institution to reduce over reliance on first and second stream income.

The UFS is focusing on research centres of excellence and research chairs to achieve this objective. Parameters for research chairs and centres of excellence will be approved, and the processes of identifying and establishing these chairs and centres in critical niche areas will be initiated. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation; Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations; and Executive Director: Advancement are accountable for the activities.

Objective 4.4: *Review and align academic programmes and support systems regularly to maximise efficiency and relevance to market and societal needs.*

Objective 4.4 is monitored quantitatively through a Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) Viability Index. The PQM Viability Index assesses the academic and financial viability of academic plans. The monitoring of this indicator (KPI 4.4.1) started in 2023, based on the work done thus far, the base line is set at 88%. There are activities such as

the resource allocation model and academic workload model, before strict evaluation to remove plans which are not considered viable.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic is accountable for the three activities under this objective; An audit of the PQM, and a critical reflection and review of the programme structures and accreditation processes, followed by streamlining the UFS PQM according to a set of agreed indicators; review of all modules within a predetermined cycle in which non-viable programmes and modules will be analysed, communicated, and corrective measures implemented. The UFS academic resource allocation and workload is being reconceptualised to promote conducive staff-student ratios and develop a road map to align the resources with the workload.

Goal 5:

Establish Collaborative Innovation and Global Integration

Objective 5.1: *Break down artificial barriers between disciplines, institutions, and sectors to foster groundbreaking discoveries at the intersection of disciplines.*

Objective 5.1 will be monitored using KPI (5.1.1), focusing on the number of cross-sector and international partnerships established annually to support collaborative research and innovation. The objective is meant to respond to the complexity of societal problems, which calls for solutions developed from more than one discipline or field of study. Therefore, research generation and knowledge training experienced by students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels should accommodate transdisciplinarity. Based on performance trend data, it was determined at a realistic baseline would be 5% and increase by 5% year-on-year. It will also be monitored through activities, which include, establishing interdisciplinary research clusters across faculties, creating joint appointment opportunities with industry and other institutions, and developing collaborative protocols for cross-sector partnerships.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation is accountable for the activities.

Objective 5.2: *Develop UFS as an Innovation Hub and true Innovative Entrepreneurial Knowledge Ecosystem, thriving on creative synergy across three campuses.*

This objective will be monitored by focusing on innovation outputs, entrepreneurial activity, and cross-campus collaboration facilitated through the Technology Transfer Office (TTO).

The objective focuses on promoting the UFS as a centre of innovation and entrepreneurship where creativity is supported so that new ideas can be turned into prototypes or services that respond to human challenges. The KPI focuses on innovation outputs, entrepreneurial activity, and cross-campus collaboration facilitated through the Technology Transfer Office (TTO). The baseline has been determined at 5% using performance trend data. The activities included: strengthening the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) as the central driver of institutional innovation and entrepreneurial support; expand innovation programmes, IP management, and entrepreneurship training through the TTO to increase applied research outputs and enterprise development; and establish a fully operational and university-wide innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem coordinated through the TTO, integrating research industry engagement, and venture creation.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation; Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic are accountable for the activities.

Objective 5.3:   *Create dynamic spaces where students tackle society's most complex challenges and learn to direct questions, and ensure AI serves humanity's highest aspirations.*

This objective will be monitored through progress in the broad institutional AI initiative, to assess improvements in the levels of AI integration into the curriculum across the institution. The objective is meant to support the speedy embrace of AI usage at the UFS and the implementation of change management. Moreover, AI adoption support has the potential to limit fear and create a conducive learning environment for students and staff. By 2028, we will develop AI policies and guidelines and systematically support students and staff.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic is accountable for the activities.

Table 1: Activities and Key Performance Indicator Targets 2026–2028

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
Goal 1: Improve our academic excellence, reputation, and impact.									
1.1 Increase impactful, collaborative research that addresses societal challenges, leverages digital innovation, and aligns with the SDGs, positioning UFS as a national and global leader.	Monitor effective implementation of the new funding modality for resourcing the research enterprise.	Monitor effective implementation of the new funding modality for resourcing the research enterprise.	Monitor effective implementation of the new funding modality for resourcing the research enterprise.	1.1.1 Share of UFS publications in Q1 and Q2 Journals[1]	59%	62%	65%	70%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Monitor effective implementation of faculty research agendas and the focus on SDGs and high-impact.	Monitor effective implementation of faculty research agendas and the focus on the SDGs and high-impact.	Monitor effective implementation of faculty research agendas and the focus on SDGs and high-impact.						
	Establish the consolidated UFS Strategic Fund to serve transdisciplinary research	Monitor the outputs and impact of transdisciplinary research funded by the consolidated UFS Strategic Fund.	Monitor the outputs and impact of transdisciplinary research funded by the consolidated UFS Strategic Fund.						

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1   Share of UFS publications in Q1 and Q2 Journals annually, only on the DHET approved submission.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
1.2 Increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of academic staff with a renowned global reputation, supported by targeted recruitment, professional development, and competitive retention strategies.	Monitor effective implementation, output, and impact of the Grow-Your-Own-Timber programme.	Monitor effective implementation, output, and impact of the Grow-Your-Own-Timber programme.	Monitor effective implementation, output, and impact of the Grow-Your-Own-Timber programme.	1.2.1 International research leaders as a share of permanent academics[2]	4%	5%	6,5%	7,5%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
				1.2.2 Permanent academic staff who are research active as a share of total permanent academic staff[3]	70%	72%	75%	78%	
	Support academics towards co-funded research opportunities with contributions from global strategic partners.	Support academics towards co-funded research opportunities with contributions from global strategic partners.	Support academics towards co-funded research opportunities with contributions from global strategic partners.	1.2.3 Co-publication: Scholarly output with international collaborators as a share of total scholarly output[4]	58%	60%	62%	65%	
	Monitor effective implementation of the Talent Management Strategy (recruitment and retention).	Monitor effective implementation of the Talent Management Strategy (recruitment and retention).	Monitor effective implementation of the Talent Management Strategy (recruitment and retention).						DVC: People and Operations
	Establish and deploy the VC Talent Magnet Fund.	Monitor effective implementation of the VC Talent Magnet Fund.	Monitor effective implementation of the VC Talent Magnet Fund.						

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2   Share of permanently appointed instruction/research staff who are leading international and internationally acclaimed researchers rated A, B, and P by the NRF.
3   Permanently appointed academic staff at the UFS who are research active (i.e. produce a master's, doctorate, or other DHET–accredited scholarly publication) as a share of total permanent academic staff at the UFS.
4   Scholarly output (number of publications) with international co-authors as a share of total scholarly output at the UFS.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
1.3 Deliver academic offerings and practices that produce graduates with future-ready skills, who are highly employable, digitally literate, and equipped to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.	Expand the Centre for Digital Futures.	Monitor the impact of the Centre for Digital Futures.	Monitor the impact of the Centre for Digital Futures.	1.3.1 Postgraduate enrolments as a share of total enrolments[5]	17%	19%	21%	23%	DVC: Academic
	Monitor the number and impact of industry collaborations/ partnerships and linkages and amend modes of engagement accordingly.	Monitor the number and impact of industry collaborations/ partnerships and linkages and amend modes of engagement accordingly.	Monitor the number and impact of industry collaborations/ partnerships and linkages and amend modes of engagement accordingly.						
	Develop and implement faculty- specific strategies for academic support and monitor students' transition to postgraduate degrees.	Develop and implement faculty- specific strategies for academic support and monitor students' transition to postgraduate degrees.	Develop and implement faculty- specific strategies for academic support and monitor students' transition to postgraduate degrees.						DVC: Academic DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Monitor the implementation of the UFS Graduate Attributes and the impact on programmes.	Monitor the implementation of the UFS Graduate Attributes and the impact on programmes.	Monitor the implementation of the UFS Graduate Attributes and the impact on programmes.	1.3.2 Share of undergraduate students with employment offer(s) within a minimum of six months after graduation[6]	32%	34%	36%	38%	DVC: Academic

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5   Doctoral, master's, Honours and postgraduate diplomas as a share of total enrolments, excluding occasional students.
6   Share of undergraduate students with employment offer(s) within a minimum of six months after their graduation, calculated using the Graduate Exit Survey.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
Goal 2: Promote an environment of agility, flexibility and responsiveness based on trust and accountability.									
2.1 Streamline, digitise, and continuously improve policies, systems, and processes to drive efficiency and responsiveness.	Review business processes at the UFS (including delegation of authority) to reduce delays.	Develop a comprehensive digital systems maturity model for implementation.	Implement a comprehensive digital systems maturity model.	2.1.1 Reduction in time delays for administrative tasks.[7]	New indicator	Base TBC	Improve-ment from base	Improve-ment from 2027	DVC: People and Operations
	Develop an enhanced workflows and dependencies implementation plan.	Implement the enhanced workflows and dependencies implementation plan.	Monitor the enhanced workflows and dependencies for continued improvement						
	Increase cross-departmental collaboration through enhanced workflows and dependencies.	Increase cross-departmental collaboration through enhanced workflows and dependencies.	Increase cross-departmental collaboration through enhanced workflows and dependencies.						
	Develop and implement a change management strategy.	Continue to implement a change management strategy.	Continue to implement a change management strategy.						
	Develop and implement an Integrated Bursaries Framework.	Monitor effective implementation of the Integrated Bursaries Framework.	Monitor effective implementation of the Integrated Bursaries Framework.						

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7   Measure the level technology adaptation in decision making across the institution using digital signatures.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
2.2 Establish academic structures and leadership capacity that foster cross-functional collaboration, agility, and effective decision-making.	Review the university governance framework to promote clear decision-making protocols, and transparent reporting mechanisms across all academic and administrative units.	Monitor effective implementation of the university governance framework to promote clear decision-making protocols, and transparent reporting mechanisms across all academic and administrative units.	Monitor effective implementation of the university governance framework to promote clear decision-making protocols, and transparent reporting mechanisms across all academic and administrative units.	2.2.1 Share of academic department heads in the faculties, who are associate professors or full professors[8]	61%	64%	67%	70%	Registrar
	Implement the reviewed faculty structures and realignment with the approved institutional principles.	Monitor effective implementation of the reviewed faculty structures and realignment with the approved institutional principles.	Monitor effective implementation of the reviewed faculty structures and realignment with the approved institutional principles.						DVC: Academic
2.3 Leverage digital technologies, business intelligence, AI and data analytics to enable evidence-based decision-making, continuous improvement, and institutional agility.	Implement and maintain BI systems, monitor user experience and enhance accordingly.	Maintain BI systems, monitor user experience, and revise accordingly.	Maintain BI systems, monitor user experience, and revise accordingly.	2.3.1 Share of UFS staff who access business intelligence platforms[9]	29%	50%	51%	52%	DVC: Strategic Initiatives, International and Institutional Affairs

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8   Academic department heads in the faculties, who are associate or full professors as a share of all academic department heads (excluding centres or units with instructional research appointments).
9   Share of UFS staff members who sign into Power BI and PowerHEDA Dashboards as a share of all staff members.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
	Conduct BI socialisation workshops across UFS campuses to promote evidence-based decision making.	Conduct BI socialisation workshops across UFS campuses to promote evidence-based decision making.	Conduct BI socialisation workshops across UFS campuses to promote evidence-based decision making.						
	Conceptualise the UFS Training Academy for the development and professionalisation of administrative and support staff.	Establish the UFS Training Academy for the development and professionalisation of administrative and support staff.	Monitor the establishment of the UFS Training Academy for the development and professionalisation of administrative and support staff.						DVC: Academic
Goal 3: Advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS.									
3.1 Create an inclusive, supportive environment for constructive engagement, well-being, and continuous measurement of cultural transformation.	Conduct Vision 130 socialisation workshops across UFS campuses.	Conduct Vision 130 socialisation workshops across UFS campuses.	Conduct Vision 130 socialisation workshops across UFS campuses.	3.1.1 Undergraduate student experience of advanced student-lecturer engagement[10]	25%	26%	28%	30%	DVC: Academic
	Establish and implement initiatives to promote student voice.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives to promote student voice.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives to promote student voice.						
	Establish and implement initiatives to promote academic freedom.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives to promote academic freedom.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives to promote academic freedom.						

10   Share of undergraduate student survey respondents who report that they have often participated in advanced forms of student-lecturer engagement during the current academic year, where advanced forms of student-lecturer engagement include the following: talked about their career plans with a lecturer; worked with a staff member on activities other than academic work; discussed module/subject topics, ideas, or concepts with a lecturer outside of class; and discussed their academic performance with a lecturer.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
	Integrate transformation into curriculum, innovative teaching methodologies, and engagement approaches.	Monitor the integration of transformation into curriculum, innovative teaching methodologies, and engagement approaches.	Monitor the integration of transformation into curriculum, innovative teaching methodologies, and engagement approaches.						
	Establish and implement initiatives to promote the UFS as first choice employer.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives to promote the UFS as first choice employer.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives to promote the UFS as first choice employer.	3.1.2 Staff experience of engagement[11]	69%	70%	72%	74%	DVC: People and Operations
	Monitor the effectiveness of committee structures and their impact.	Monitor the effectiveness of committee structures and their impact.	Monitor the effectiveness of committee structures and their impact.						Registrar
	Promote and monitor future-centric dialogue across the institution.	Promote and monitor future-centric dialogue across the institution.	Promote and monitor future-centric dialogue across the institution.						DVC: Strategic Initiatives, International and Institutional Affairs.
	Establish the Free State Futures Forum.	Monitor effective implementation of the Free State Futures Forum.	Monitor effective implementation of the Free State Futures Forum.						

11   Overall staff engagement survey respondents who are satisfied with their engagement experience in the work environment, calculated using the Thomas International survey tool.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
3.2 Become an institution of choice for exceptional students, academics, and support staff, through a values–driven culture and competitive opportunities for growth and recognition.	Review the marketing and communication approach to position the UFS in line with Vision 130,	Monitor implementation of the reviewed marketing and communication approach.	Monitor implementation of the reviewed marketing and communication approach.	3.2.1 Share of active permanent academic staff from historically disadvantaged backgrounds[12]	46%	50%	52%	54%	ED: Advancement
	Implement initiatives to increase academics from historically disadvantaged demographics.	Implement initiatives to increase academics from historically disadvantaged demographics.	Implement initiatives to increase academics from historically disadvantaged demographics.						DVC: Academic
	Employ and promote a diverse and talented academic staff complement, prioritising staff with doctorates.	Employ and promote a diverse and talented academic staff complement, prioritising staff with doctorates.	Employ and promote a diverse and talented academic staff complement, prioritising staff with doctorates.	3.2.2 Share of permanent academic staff with PhDs[13]	64%	65%	66%	67%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation DVC: People and Operations
	Review and implement the student recruitment and admission strategy to recruit top matriculants and graduate students.	Monitor effective implementation of the student recruitment and admission strategy.	Monitor effective implementation of the student recruitment and admission strategy.	3.2.3 Share of first-time entering undergraduate students with admission point score (APS) of 35 and above[14]	38%	45%	50%	55%	ED: Advancement
	Establish and promote staff engagement sessions to promote an inclusive and vibrant work ethos.	Establish and promote staff engagement sessions to promote an inclusive and vibrant work ethos.	Establish and promote staff engagement sessions to promote an inclusive and vibrant work ethos.						DVC: People and Operations

12   Share of active permanent academic staff from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (including African, Indian, and Coloured academics, irrespective of nationality) as a percentage of total active permanent academic staff.
13   Share of active permanent academic staff in academic positions with a PhD, as a percentage of total active permanent academic staff in academic position.
14   Share of first year (i.e., first-time entering undergraduate) students with an admission point score (APS) of 35 and above in Bachelor degrees.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
3.3 Become a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and supporting holistic development.	Implement initiatives to strengthen the Residential Colleges' framework.	Monitor implemented initiatives to strengthen the Residential Colleges' framework.	Monitor implemented initiatives to strengthen the Residential Colleges' framework.	**3.3.1** Student satisfaction with residence life programmes[15]	30%	32%	35%	38%	ED: Student Affairs, Sport, Arts and Culture
	Implement initiatives in Residential Colleges to support student success.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives in Residential Colleges to support student success.	Monitor effective implementation of initiatives in Residential Colleges to support student success.						
	Conduct staff and students' focus group consultations to discuss the institutional transformation position.	Conduct staff and student consultations to develop the institutional culture enhancement plan.	Implement the institutional culture enhancement plan.						DVC: Strategic Initiatives, International and Institutional Affairs.
	Develop indicators and metrics to monitor transformation.	Use the annual students and staff survey to monitor transformation.	Use the annual students and staff survey to monitor transformation.						
3.4 Improve the equity profile of academic leadership through targeted recruitment, systematic monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.	Develop a headhunting strategy to guide recruitment, development, and retaining of academic staff from designated groups.	Implement the headhunting strategy to guide recruitment, development, and retaining of academic staff from designated groups.	Create additional opportunities to promote academic staff from designated groups, particularly women.	**3.4.1** Share of professoriate who are female[16]	36%	38%	40%	42%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation DVC: People and Operations

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15   Share of student survey respondents who reported being aware of residence life programmes, participating in programmes and about their relevance.
16   Share of female professors at the UFS.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
Goal 4: Promote stewardship and prioritisation of institutional resources for strategic intent.									
4.1 Optimise professional and support structures through digital transformation, process automation, and regular review.	Monitor digitalisation initiatives across the institution.	Monitor digitalisation initiatives across the institution.	Monitor digitalisation initiatives across the institution.	4.1.1 Digitalised institutional processes[17].	New indicator	Base TBC	Improve-ment from base	Improve-ment from 2027	DVC: People and Operations
	Implement institutional awareness of digitalisation initiatives.	Implement institutional awareness of digitalisation initiatives.	Implement institutional awareness of digitalisation initiatives.						
4.2 Deploy the principles of resource investment to enable academic excellence, with particular emphasis on research, postgraduate studies, and sustainable innovation infrastructure.	Investment in infrastructure and relevant technologies to create an enabling environment to function optimally across all campuses.	Monitor effective investment in infrastructure and relevant technologies.	Monitor effective investment in infrastructure and relevant technologies.	4.2.1 Postgraduate Student experience of services and support provided by the UFS[18]	Revised indicator	Base TBC	Improve-ment from base	Improve-ment from 2027	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation

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17   Monitor the implementation of major institutional projects promoting latest technological adaptation.
18   Share of postdoctoral fellow and postgraduate student survey respondents who are satisfied with 5 relevant support services provided to students by the UFS.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
4.3 Increase our research and innovation competitiveness by diversifying revenue streams, strengthening partnerships, and commercialising intellectual property.	Establish research chairs and conceptualise centres of excellence in critical niche areas.	Establish more research chairs and centres of excellence in critical niche areas.	Establish research chairs and centres of excellence in critical niche areas.	**4.3.1** Research income as a share of total income[19]	8%	11%	13%	15%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Develop a sustainable funding model that serves society while remaining academically and financially viable.	Monitor the sustainability of the funding model that serves society while remaining academically and financially viable.	Monitor the sustainability of the funding model that serves society while remaining academically and financially viable.						DVC: People and Operations
	Implement initiatives to increase third-stream income by 5%.	Implement initiatives to increase third-stream income by 10%.	Implement initiatives to increase third-stream income by 10%.						DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Establish the UFS Knowledge Enterprise and UFS Commercial Entities.	Monitor the UFS Knowledge Enterprise and UFS Commercial Entities.	Monitor the UFS Knowledge Enterprise and UFS Commercial Entities.	**4.3.2** Number of distinct research-derived outputs that reach formal external utilisation or market-readiness[20]	2	4	6	8	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation

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19   Income from research output block grant, earmarked grants for research, and contracts for research and clinical research activities, as a share of the grand total income of the Group.

20   Measures the number of research-derived outputs year-on-year that achieve formal external uptake or market-readiness through licensing, spin-out formation, outsourced manufacturing, co-development partnerships, or third-party deployment agreements.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
	Implement initiatives to increase partnerships and philanthropy income by 50%.	Implement initiatives to increase partnerships and philanthropy income by 75%.	Implement initiatives to increase partnerships and philanthropy income by 75%.	4.3.3 Share of income from donations and philanthropy[21]	New indicator	Base TBC	Improve-ment from base	Improve-ment from 2027	ED: Advancement
	Launch the VC–ISRC Imbewu Legacy Fund for student support.	Monitor the VC–ISRC Imbewu Legacy Fund for student support.	Monitor the VC–ISRC Imbewu Legacy Fund for student support.						
4.4 Review and align academic programmes and support systems regularly to maximise efficiency and relevance to market and societal needs.	Monitor the PQM in accordance with the agreed indicators as reflected in the PQM Viability Index and implement improvement initiatives accordingly.	Monitor the PQM in accordance with the agreed indicators as reflected in the PQM Viability Index and implement improvement initiatives accordingly.	Monitor the PQM in accordance with the agreed indicators as reflected in the PQM Viability Index and implement improvement initiatives accordingly.	4.4.1 Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) viability[22]	88%	89%	90%	91%	DVC: Academic
	Module viability model	Academic department viability guidelines	Conduct a comprehensive academic programme portfolio review against market demands and societal needs.						
	Academic resource allocation model	Academic workload allocation model	Implement programme rationalisation based on efficiency and sustainability metrics.						

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21 Share of institutional income from donations and philanthropy per year.
22 Share of PQM plans that are viable, as measured through the UFS PQM Viability Index.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
Goal 5: Establish collaborative innovation and global integration.									
5.1 Break down artificial barriers between disciplines, institutions, and sectors to foster groundbreaking discoveries at the intersection of disciplines.	Drive research, commercialisation, and industry partnerships through the South Campus innovation hub	Monitor the improvement in research, commercialisation, and industry partnerships through the South Campus innovation hub.	Monitor the improvement in research, commercialisation, and industry partnerships through the South Campus innovation hub.	5.1.1 Number of cross-sector and international partnerships established annually that support collaborative research and innovation [23]	5%	5%	10%	15%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Establish interdisciplinary research clusters across faculties.	Establish and monitor interdisciplinary research clusters across faculties.	Establish and monitor interdisciplinary research clusters across faculties.						
	Create joint appointment opportunities with industry and other institutions.	Create joint appointment opportunities with industry and other institutions.	Create joint appointment opportunities with industry and other institutions.						

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23   Measures the number of cross-sector and international partnerships established that support collaborative research and innovation year-on-year.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
5.2 Develop UFS as an Innovation Hub and true Innovative Entrepreneurial Knowledge Ecosystem, thriving on creative synergy across three campuses.	Strengthen the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) as the central driver of institutional innovation and entrepreneurial support.	Expand innovation programmes, IP management, and entrepreneurship training through the TTO to increase applied research outputs and enterprise development.	Establish a fully operational university-wide innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem coordinated through the TTO, integrating research industry engagement, and venture creation.	**5.2.1** Innovation outputs, entrepreneurial activity, and cross-campus collaboration facilitated through the Technology Transfer Office (TTO)[24]	5%	5%	10%	20%	DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Continue with Phase 1 infrastructure development to complete the re-imagination of the South Campus.	Complete Phase 1 infrastructure development to complete the re-imagination of the South Campus.	Initiate Phase 2 infrastructure development to complete the re-imagination of the South Campus.						DVC: People and Operations
	Develop a coordinated incubation framework through the TTO that enables both virtual and physical incubation, leveraging existing research and innovation infrastructure.	Expand incubation support by linking innovators to mentorship, technical services, and external partners using existing facilities and digital platforms.	Demonstrate measurable outcomes from the incubation pipeline, including validated technologies, pilot deployments, or investor or industry readiness.						DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation

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24   Measures the annual growth in innovation outputs (e.g., prototypes, technologies, validated processes), staff and student entrepreneurial initiatives, and collaborative projects managed or supported by the TTO that involve multiple faculties or campuses.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
	Create inter-campus collaboration mechanisms and shared resources.	Implement inter-campus collaboration mechanisms and shared resources.	Implement inter-campus collaboration mechanisms and shared resources.						
	Develop entrepreneurship education programmes across all faculties.	Develop and implement entrepreneurship education programmes across all faculties.	Develop and implement entrepreneurship education programmes across all faculties.						DVC: Academic
	Establish society – industry partnership agreements for co-located facilities.	Establish and monitor society – industry partnership agreements for co-located facilities.	Establish and monitor society – industry partnership agreements for co-located facilities.						DVC: Research, Post-graduate Studies and Innovation
	Launch collaborative research and development programmes with society and industry partners.	Increase collaborative research and development programmes with society and industry partners.	Increase collaborative research and development programmes with society and industry partners.						

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES			KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	BASE	TARGETS			ACCOUNTABLE EXECUTIVE PORTIFOLIO
	2026	2027	2028			2026	2027	2028	
5.3 Create dynamic spaces where students tackle society's most complex challenges and learn to direct, question, and ensure AI serves humanity's highest aspirations.	Establish challenge-based learning programmes addressing societal issues.	Implement established challenge-based learning programmes addressing societal issues.	Implement established challenge-based learning programmes addressing societal issues.	5.3.1 AI integration into the curriculum[25]	New indicator	Base TBC	Improve-ment from base	Improve-ment from 2027	DVC: Academic
	Integrate AI ethics and governance into the curriculum across disciplines.	Integrate AI ethics and governance into the curriculum across disciplines.	Integrate AI ethics and governance into the curriculum across disciplines.						
	Create student-led innovation projects with real-world impact.	Create student-led innovation projects with real-world impact.	Create student-led innovation projects with real-world impact.						
	Launch mentorship programmes pairing students with industry experts and researchers.	Monitor effective implementation of the mentorship programmes pairing students with industry experts and researchers.	Monitor effective implementation of the mentorship programmes pairing students with industry experts and researchers.						
	Initiate annual student innovation expo showcasing relevant solutions to real-world challenges.	Continue effective implementation of the annual student innovation expo showcasing relevant solutions to real-world challenges.	Continue effective implementation of the annual student innovation expo showcasing relevant solutions to real-world challenges.						

25   Measures the level of AI integration into the curriculum across the institution by monitoring progress in the broad institutional AI initiative.

Enrolment plan

Table 2 presents the UFS's key Enrolment Plan targets, as agreed with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation. In committing the UFS to its 2026-2028 enrolment targets, the imperatives of maintaining high quality, enhancing success, and promoting its vision as a research-led university remain at the core of all internal engagements. The plan addresses the need for quality graduates and impactful research to develop new knowledge.

Table 2: Enrolment Plan Targets 2026-2028

ENROLMENT PLAN TABLE		DISAGGREGATION	2024 BASELINE	2026 TARGETS MID-YEAR	2026 TARGETS YEAR-END	2027 TARGETS MID-YEAR	2027 TARGETS YEAR-END	2028 TARGETS MID-YEAR	2028 TARGETS YEAR-END
ENROLMENTS									
		Total headcount (HC) enrolments (contact and distance)	39 964	40 285	41 964	38 673	40 815	38 405	40 006
1		First-time entering undergraduate HC enrolments (contact and distance)	8 254	7 776	8 100	7 776	8 100	7 776	8 100
FP		Foundation student HC intake into the first year	1 588	901	939	663	691	467	487
9	Proportion of total HC enrolements per major field of study	Science, engineering, technology	25%	29%	29%	30%	30%	32%	32%
		Business/management	19%	18%	19%	20%	20%	22%	22%
		Education	23%	19%	19%	20%	20%	20%	20%
		Other humanities	33%	33%	33%	29%	29%	26%	26%
20	Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolements	Total Unweighted FTEs	32 028	N/A[1]	34 782	N/A	34062	N/A	33 640
		Weighted FTEs/funded teaching input units (TIUs)	68 866	N/A	70 555	N/A	71 284	N/A	71 971
SUCCESS									
33	Total success rates		83%	N/A	83%	N/A	83%	N/A	83%
		Total undergraduate	6 462	N/A	7 000	N/A	6 800	N/A	6 600
35	Graduate HC by qulification type	Postgraduate to Master's level	1 975	N/A	1 952	N/A	2 016	N/A	2 361
		Master's	650	N/A	680	N/A	690	N/A	720
		Doctoral	163	N/A	200	N/A	210	N/A	240
		Total	9 250	N/A	9 832	N/A	9 716	N/A	9 921
47c	Total undergraduate graduate HC in scarce skills areas	Engineering	3	N/A	23	N/A	0	N/A	0
49c		Life and Physical Sciences	759	N/A	455	N/A	460	N/A	465
46c		Animal Sciences	100	N/A	67	N/A	71	N/A	72
48c		Human Health	442	N/A	400	N/A	421	N/A	430
50b		Teacher Education	821	N/A	2 433	N/A	2 273	N/A	2 109
RESEARCH									
43	Research outputs	Total publication output units	1 498[2]	N/A	1 750	N/A	1 838	N/A	1 925
44		Total publication output units per capita	1.5	N/A	0.93	N/A	0.99	N/A	1.04

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1 Values are calculated on an annual basis and are therefore only available in June of year n+1.
2 Audited values for 2024, as of October 2025.

The enrolment targets have been carefully considered to reflect the University's efforts towards a 30/70 distribution between postgraduate and undergraduate enrolments by 2034. This consultative process marks the second phase of developing a three-year rolling Annual Performance Plan (APP) in a series of iterations towards achieving this desired distribution. Furthermore, the outcome of this consultative process culminated in the following principles:

- Consider a slight decrease to 40 009 headcount enrolments by 2028 to a provide specific decrease in undergraduate enrolments, while encouraging growth in postgraduate enrolments as well as science, engineering, and technology (SET) and new developments in engineering and agriculture.
- Monitor the proportional distribution between post- and undergraduate headcount enrolments to ensure adequate capacity and progression from undergraduate to Honours, Master's, and doctoral studies.
- Give expression to the UFS vision of becoming a research-led university through a higher growth percentage for postgraduate studies.
- Ensure that a growth strategy for postgraduate studies is in line with the university's overall carrying capacity.
- Reduce distance education provisioning due to the low uptake, quality education, and strategic intent.
- Ensure optimal staff-student ratios, including infrastructure, pedagogy, mode of delivery, and staffing.

These principles have been applied consistently and allowed the UFS to reflect critically on its size and shape as well as the policies and procedures to sustain and manage enrolment targets. As far as reasonably possible, the UFS remains committed to achieving the 2026-2028 enrolment targets, which is indicative of the realisation of Vision 130.

Earmarked grants from the Department of Higher Education and Training

Earmarked grants are used to steer the sector towards the targets agreed upon within the enrolment planning exercise and ensure that universities address national priorities. The outline below presents a short narrative of the intended purposes of each earmarked grant at the UFS.

Infrastructure and Efficiency

The Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (IEG) support general university infrastructure and efficiency projects as part of a macro infrastructure planning framework that considers strategic development plans, disability audits, changes in digital learning platforms and maintenance plans previously submitted by universities.

The most recent allocations (2022/2023) were received for the expansion of the Qwaqwa Campus Solar Plant, Digital Optimisation Platforms, Digital/Cyber Security, Virtualised Environment Infrastructure (Citrix), Lecture Capturing Systems, enabling of Blended Learning (mirror classrooms), Security (CCTV and Alarm Systems), and Fire Detection systems in UFS buildings.

The funds will and have been utilised according to the conditions of open and transparent procurement processes. Monthly reports are submitted to the DHET as part of the Infrastructure Reporting Model (IRM) implemented by the National Treasury. Expenditure is also audited on an annual basis as part of the UFS's internal and external auditing systems.

University Capacity Development Grant

The University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) is an integrated, people-focused, and transformative programme designed to address capacity development within the UFS at all levels and areas (research, teaching, and curriculum/programme development) to address access and success. The UFS complies with the policy directives of the UCDG and has several interventions within the three core components – student development, staff development, and programme/curriculum development – and operates

at the nexus of quality, equity, and success in universities. The UCDG is a well-structured programme, and the spending patterns show that the university has a healthy expenditure record above 90% in the previous 3-year cycle (2021-2023) and 97% in 2024, which is first year of the next 3-year cycle of 2024-2026.

The UFS team works continuously with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and CREST to improve and enhance the quality of the UCDP Plan to implement the theory of change to address capacity development challenges. Tighter monthly monitoring and evaluation meetings enhance the expenditure rate of all the planned activities as well. In a recent sectorial monitoring and evaluation meeting, the UFS was commended for its approach to the management of the UCDG. For the current year the monthly expenditure data shows that the UFS is on track to effectively spend the allocated 2025 UCDG.

New Generation of Academics Programme

The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) is based on carefully designed and balanced equity considerations and the disciplinary areas with the greatest need. The nGAP six-year programme and funds are used according to the nGAP Standard Operating Procedures. To this end, the UFS has been allocated 30 nGAP positions in successive cohorts over six years.

The nGAP is a purposefully driven vehicle to build capacity within the University, and a key driver for its success is the ability to recruit, develop, and retain qualified staff. Hence, the UFS' employee retention programmes are vital to attract and retain key employees and reduce turnover and related costs. However, the demand for scarce skills in the sector and beyond is higher than the current supply. Hence, managing the nGAP grant to address full employment is continuing. The UFS has a dedicated team working on the nGAP life cycle, from attraction, and recruitment to on-boarding, development, and retention.

In summary, out of the 30 allocated posts, 25 have been filled, two will not be filled because the lecturers resigned after completion of the programme, two are vacant, and a recommendation for appointment for one position has been sent to the DHET for approval. The UFS has all interventions in place to manage the life cycle of an nGAP recruit and remains committed to filling these vacant positions. Furthermore, the UFS values the impact of this earmark grant. Within this context, the UFS has the requisite capacity, skills, and interventions to fully consume the allocated funds.

Foundation Provision Grant

The primary purpose of the foundation provision grant is to ensure that educationally disadvantaged students are given the necessary academic foundation support to successfully complete their studies in becoming graduates which will consequently improve the student graduation rate.

The effective use of the foundation provision grant is managed through two strategies: initiatives supporting the faculties and institutional support. The following initiatives have been implemented to ensure academic support to students and the effective utilisation of the foundation grants:

- PROGRAMME 1: FOUNDATION EMS PATHWAYS PROJECT
  Developing foundation quantitative and statistical business skills in students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) has been piloted with great success over two years. The Math Pathways programme will be a continued initiative in EMS to support students with quantitative and statistical business skills development to enhance their academic success.

- PROGRAMME 2: ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISING AND TUTORIAL SUPPORT
  Additional bootcamp tutorials for foundation students are introduced to support academic performance and success as well as additional academic advising capacity to support students on scale.

Clinical Training Grant

The Clinical Training Grant has dedicated plans for allocating the requisite capacity to monitor the activities, commitments, and spending patterns. Planned expenses for this reporting period include (among others) salaries for 87 clinical and 26 support staff members (77,4% of our annual budget, 44 permanent staff, and 69 temporary/session staff), operational costs associated with clinical training areas and the community-based education (CBE)/interprofessional education (IPE) site, and repairs and maintenance of simulation and/or other clinical equipment. The Faculty of Health Sciences is currently awaiting directives from the DHET on the next three-year cycle of the grant (i.e., 2026-2028).

Budget and Cash Flow 2026–2029

This section presents the proposed budget for the four-year period from 2026-2029, covering a balanced financial plan at the institutional level. The primary objective is to ensure that the university achieves a balanced budget by accurately estimating income and resource allocations, adhering to a financially sustainable model. While acknowledging the university's Vision 130 and strategic objectives. Therefore, significant emphasis is placed on aligning resource allocation with these goals.

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE FINANCIAL REVIEW (R'000)	2026 Budget	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast	2029 Forecast
General subsidy	2,032,664	2,095,676	2,302,962	2,414,184
As % of income	54.17%	54.18%	55.48%	56.31%
Tuition and other fees	1,684,102	1,735,508	1,809,081	1,832,475
As % of income	44.88%	44.87%	43.58%	42.74%
Other income	35,432	37,027	38,693	40,434
As % of income	0.94%	0.96%	0.93%	0.94%
TOTAL INCOME	3,752,198	3,868,212	4,150,736	4,287,093
Growth in income	3.7%	3.1%	7.3%	3.3%
Staff costs	2,276,902	2,359,609	2,531,949	2,615,127
As % of income	60.68%	61.00%	61.00%	61.00%
Supplies & Services	1,022,220	1,100,350	1,155,368	1,213,136
As % of income	27.2%	28.4%	27.8%	28.3%
Sundry	155,185	178,971	186,130	193,575
EXPENDITURE	3,454,307	3,638,931	3,873,447	4,021,838
Funds available before other income	297,890	229,281	277,289	265,255
Other income	351,536	340,538	354,160	368,326
Investment income	307,043	337,418	350,915	364,951
Cost Recoveries	41,493			
Indirect cost recoveries	3,000	3,120	3,245	3,375
Budget variances available to budget	56,074	0	0	0
FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR RESERVES, INSTITUTIONAL PILLARS AND STRAT FUNDS PROJECTS	705,500 / -705,500	569,819 / -569,819	631,449 / -631,449	633,581 / -633,581
General reserves (2%)	81,337	84,113	90,033	93,041
Strategic reserve				
Institutional pillars (including capex)	427,233	444,322	462,095	480,579
Strategic projects	207,591	41,384	79,320	59,961
	716,161			
	-10,661			
Unspent prior year strat funds	-63,483			
Re-allocation to stabilisation fund	52,822			
FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO NEXT YEAR	0	0	0	0

Council Controlled Budget 2026

Subsidy

The Minister of Higher Education annually announces the subsidy for higher education institutions following the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) discussions. This announcement focuses on enhancing access to higher education and improving graduation rates, research output, and student success.

While no budget cuts are expected for the sector in 2026, the university continues to foresee potential pressure on government funded subsidies from 2026 onwards, driven by increasing financial obligations within the sector and funding pressures due to NSFAS funding shortfalls.

Tuition and Other Income

Tuition fee income is projected to grow by 4.35% in 2026. The projected increase accounts for Council approved fee adjustments and variations in undergraduate and postgraduate fees.

The university operates on a historically low fee base compared to other institutions in the sector. The annual student fee increases advised by the Minister of Higher Education typically match inflation rates, yet the cost of providing education at the UFS has increased in the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI), which historically exceeds general inflation. This discrepancy has resulted in a real-term decline in income from student fees.

Continuous pressure towards accommodating students with historical debt places a significant strain on the institution.

Other income mainly includes recovered credit losses and rental income. These are not representative of the university's alternative income related to research contracts, grants and other restricted revenue.

Staff remuneration costs

Staff remuneration for 2026 is projected at 60.7% of total income (2025: 59.11%). This remains within the sector benchmark of 58%–62%.

Salary negotiations are facilitated through the Joint Bargaining Forum. The current approach focuses on ensuring affordability while maintaining the agreed 53% staff cost threshold (excluding the Faculty of Health Sciences).

Supplies and services

This includes the operational budgets of faculties and departments as well as and centrally controlled expenditure.

Operational allocations

A 4% increase on the recurring 2025 operational allocations is proposed for 2026. This increase supports intentional spending and resource optimisation, protecting operational effectiveness.

Centrally controlled allocations

Assumptions underlying centrally controlled expenses are determined individually for each item, considering historical expenditure patterns as well as cost inflation associated with the specific item and anticipated usage for the forthcoming year.

The most significant categories included in the centrally controlled allocation are as follows:

Expense Type	2025	2026
Electricity	98,485,663	106,364,516
Rates & Taxes	70,257,291	79,517,247
Corporate Licensing	167,361,210	180,462, 518
Water	36,025,201	39,627,721
Other	63,026,421	80,765,419
Total	435,466,458	486,737,421

Figure 3: Centrally Controlled Allocation

Sundry transfers

These transfers aim to disclose expenditure that naturally does not fit into the categories of staff costs or operational expenditure. The most significant items are:

Bursaries

A review of bursary funding revealed that several bursary funds remain underutilised due to misaligned criteria. It was recommended that bursaries be consolidated and restructured to align with UFS strategy and that bursary criteria be revisited.

Strategic bursaries should support the recruitment and retention of top-performing students and provide multi-year funding for tuition and accommodation.

Strategic funds

Strategic funds serve two purposes. To fund strategic institutional pillars and projects. Reserve contributions are also funded from strategic funds.

Reserves

The UFS aims to contribute 2% annually to the general reserve, contingent upon financial affordability. Based on affordability contributions towards other strategic reserves are also prioritised.

Re-allocation of unspent 2024 strategic funds

Unused strategic funds from previous years' budgets are made available for strategic priorities, including the funding of strategic institutional pillars (including reserves) or alternatively strategic projects.

An amount of R63.4m is being re-allocated from 2024. The funds are first prioritized to supplement the 2026 budget deficit for strategic projects with R8,114m.

The balance of R52,822 to be allocated to the stabilisation fund of the UFS.

Given the projected decline in long-term funding available for strategic projects, annual contributions to the Stabilisation Fund, when funding is available, remain essential. These allocations provide a financial buffer to safeguard against volatility, ensuring that the university can maintain continuity of operations while current strategic initiatives to support long-term sustainability are tested and proven successful. Sustained investment in the Stabilisation Fund is therefore critical to underpinning the UFS's financial resilience and protecting institutional priorities during periods of uncertainty.

Council Controlled Budget 2027–2029

The university's medium-term budget outlook (2027–2029) reflects a stable but pressured financial framework. Income remains dominated by government subsidy and tuition fees, while expenditure is tightly managed within pre-determined ratios. While the financial model shows stability in the short-to-medium term, risks relating to subsidy dependency, cost inflation, and fee affordability remain material concerns. In addition, the projected growth in expenditure exceeding traditional income streams highlight the need for income diversification and growth to support long term sustainability.

Key Budget Assumptions and Risks (2027–2029)

Category	Assumption / Projection	Risk / Commentary
General Subsidy	R2.10bn in 2027 rising to R2.44bn in 2029 (~54–57% of income).	Dependency on DHET allocations remains high. Changes to the funding formula could materially affect revenue.
Tuition & Fees	R1.74bn in 2027 increasing to R1.83bn in 2029 (~43–45% of income). Escalated at 4.5% annually, with 11% bad debt provision and remissions capped at R30m p.a.	Affordability constraints and NSFAS risks could undermine projections; bad debt risk remains significant.
Other Income	Grows modestly from R37m (2027) to R40m (2029) (<1% of income).	Negligible diversification beyond subsidy and tuition.
Total Income	R3.87bn (2027) rising to R4.31bn (2029).	Steady growth but reliant on subsidy policy stability and enrolment trends.
Staff Costs	Maintained at 61% of income: R2.36bn $\rightarrow$ (2027) R2.615bn (2029).	Aligned to funding model.
Supplies & Services	R1.10bn (2027) increasing to R1.21bn (2029), escalated 5% per year.	Inflationary pressures (HEPI-sensitive items such as energy and ICT) could exceed assumptions should cost mitigation actions fail.
Sundry	R178m (2027) $\rightarrow$ R193m (2029).	Strategic drive to increase externally funded bursaries to relieve pressure on Council controlled budget relating to bursary funding.
Other Income (Investment & Recoveries)	R340m (2027) $\rightarrow$ R368m (2029), dominated by investment returns.	Dependent on volatile financial markets and recovery performance.
Strategic Funds	Allocated at 15% of income; strategic projects receive R41m (2027), rising to R59m (2029).	Funding available for strategic investment remains but are severely constrained.

Financial sustainability review

The financial position of the UFS reflects the broader challenges faced by South African public universities. The university is heavily reliant on government subsidies and student fees, with limited contributions from third-stream income. The inability to increase undergraduate student fees beyond inflation, coupled with the heavy dependence on NSFAS, has placed significant financial strain on the institution. While the UFS has taken steps to optimize costs and improve sustainability, the current financial structure is not sustainable in the long term. Without substantial increases in government funding or alternative revenue streams, the university may face increasing difficulties in the long term to maintain its operations and achieve its strategic objectives. The UFS will continue to explore innovative financial strategies to ensure its future financial stability and success.

Key factors for financial sustainability include:
- Subsidy optimisation: Focus on increasing postgraduate enrolments, improving throughput rates, boosting research output, and recruiting postdoctoral students.
- Ensure compliance with DHET targets (e.g., Teaching Input Units) to avoid penalties by continuously improving the university's performance in teaching and research output.
- The university is actively pursuing ways to increase alternative income, including partnerships, fundraising, and commercial initiatives to reduce dependency on government subsidies.

- Expense management: The university remains committed to intentional spending and resource optimization to ensure financial efficiency. To achieve this, various analytical models are employed, including assessments of the academic and financial viability of departments, the workload model, and the optimal Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) model. The results from these models provide valuable insights that inform management decisions, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and in alignment with institutional priorities. This data-driven approach supports the optimization of resources while maintaining financial sustainability across the university.
- Minimising irrecoverable student fees: Implementation of pro-active debt management and communication strategies to minimise irrecoverable student fees and bad debt write-offs.

Uncertainty in future subsidy increases and the economic environment may pose a risk to financial planning beyond 2026.

Therefore, the institution is confident in the balanced budget presented, as it reflects a solid financial foundation for the upcoming period. However, we recognise that proactive management of the budget will be essential to ensure that resources are optimised and the institution's long-term sustainability is maintained. Continuous monitoring and strategic adjustments will be key to navigating potential challenges and securing the future financial health of the university.

Housing and Residence Affairs Budget 2025 and Forecast 2025–2028

	Notes	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2028 Budget	2029 Budget
TOTAL INCOME	&	279 108 193	295 778 032	313 352 945	331 979 893
ACCOMMODATION	#	274 400 572	290 864 606	308 316 483	326 815 472
ACCREDITATION INCOME		1 750 000	1 837 500	1 837 500	1 837 500
OTHER INCOME		2 957 621	3 075 925	3 198 962	3 326 921
TOTAL EXPENSES		249 274 692	263 132 289	277 997 140	293 955 056
PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE	&	90 807 588	93 531 816	96 337 770	99 227 903
ELECTRICITY AND WATER		65 494 952	72 248 892	79 248 892	87 173 781
MAINTENANCE		17 297 561	18 075 951	18 889 369	19 739 391
BUILDINGS		14 624 858	15 282 977	15 970 711	16 689 392
– EQUIPMENT		2 221 888	2 321 873	2 426 357	2 535 543
– VEHICLES		450 815	471 102	492 301	514 455
SECURITY SERVICES		11 336 891	11 563 629	11 794 901	12 030 799
INTEREST AND REDEMPTION	@	36 636 054	39 383 751	42 337 532	45 512 845
OTHER EXPENSES		27 701 646	28 532 695	29 388 676	30 270 336
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) BEFORE CAPITAL EXPENSES		29 833 501	32 645 743	35 355 805	38 024 837
LESS: DEFERRED MAINTENANCE RESERVE		17 002 511	18 282 125	19 650 191	21 112 543
– BUILDINGS – 11,25% of accommodation income less actual cost		16 245 206	17 439 292	18 714 894	20 077 348
– EQUIPMENT – 1% of accommodation income less actual cost		522 118	586 773	656 808	732 612
– VEHICLES – 0,25% of accommodation income less actual cost		235 186	256 060	278 490	302 584
LESS: ASSET PRESERVATION RESERVE 2,5% OF ACCOMMODATION INCOME		6 860 014	7 271 615	7 707 912	8 170 387
(Urgency to upgrade old residences in support of the academic project)					
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) AFTER CAPITAL PRESERVATION	%	5 970 976	7 092 003	7 997 701	8 741 907

Notes

& – 95% occupancy planned for 2026– 2030
* – 6.5% increase in accommodation income for 2026 and 6% increase from 2027 onwards
# – Bad debt provision of R9.4m included in 2026 onwards representing doubtful debt
$ – Personnel expenditure 2026 increase 4,5% for 2026 and 3% from 2027 onwards due to optimisation initiatives @-External loan commitments
% – Surplus is applied to external loan reserve and general reserves.

The budget for Housing and Residence Affairs (Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa, and South Campus) reflects a stable and sustainable trajectory over the 2026–2030 period, with income growth driven primarily by accommodation revenue (6.5% increase in 2026 and 6% thereafter), assuming a steady 95% occupancy rate. Accreditation and other income streams remain marginal contributors.

Expenditure growth is contained within manageable levels, with personnel costs moderated to 3% increases from 2027 due to optimisation initiatives. The largest cost pressures are utilities (electricity and water), projected to grow by more than 45% over the period, and rising external loan servicing obligations. Maintenance, security, and other operating expenses remain proportionate to income growth.

Before capital allocations, annual surpluses range between R29.8m in 2026 and R40.7m in 2030. After applying deferred maintenance and asset preservation reserves-critical to sustaining the residence infrastructure-the net surpluses remain positive, improving gradually from R6.0m in 2026 to R9.4m in 2030.

In conclusion, the Housing and Residence Affairs budget demonstrates:

- Sustainability: Operating surpluses are maintained across the five-year horizon, even after funding deferred maintenance and preservation reserves.
- Controlled expenditure: Major cost categories remain aligned with strategic ratios, though utility costs represent a significant upward risk.
- Infrastructure focus: Continued allocations to maintenance and asset preservation support the longevity and quality of the student housing portfolio.
- Contribution to reserves: Surpluses will strengthen external loan repayments and general reserves, supporting the university's broader financial stability.

Overall, the budget reflects a balanced but cautious outlook, with sufficient provision for infrastructure sustainability, while maintaining moderate surpluses that contribute to institutional resilience.

Capital and deferred maintenance

Effective capital expenditure management is crucial for maintaining infrastructure, enhancing service delivery, and ensuring operational efficiency. In reviewing these costs, we assess whether the allocation is adequate to cover existing and future needs without compromising institutional goals or burdening financial resources.

The institution has taken a risk-based approach to capital and maintenance costs. A robust contingency plan is in place to manage unexpected capital needs or urgent deferred maintenance that may arise.

Below is a summary of the capital budget for 2026.

Allocation from strategic funds (Council controlled budget)

Annual allocation to the capital budget	R 121 258 000
Security systems and sport funded from strategic funds	R 10 750 000
Contribution to DHET infrastructure	R 5 000 000 (provision)

The current capital and deferred maintenance costs are sufficient for maintaining institutional operations and mitigating the associated risks. By adopting a strategic, risk-based approach, the institution has been able to balance its immediate capital needs with deferred maintenance responsibilities without overextending financial resources. This sufficiency is evident in the prioritisation of critical infrastructure maintenance, cost-effective management of non-essential deferred tasks, and effective use of capital for growth and efficiency improvements. For these reasons, it is recommended that the current budget allocations remain unchanged, with continued monitoring to ensure cost-effectiveness and alignment with strategic objectives.

Council Controlled Budget

CAPITAL BUDGET 2026 AND PROPOSED CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2027 – 2029		2026	2027	2028	2029
A: BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS					
ACADEMIC FACILITIES		23,400,000	24,500,000	26,500,000	23,500,000
1	General: Emergency	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
2	Lecture Rooms, Laboratories and general academic spaces	3,000,000	4,000,000	6,000,000	3,000,000
	Infrastructure Needs to be defined applicable 2027 onwards	-	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
3	Innovation/collaborative space	5,000,000	-	-	-
4	Renovations to ED office suite after SRC moved out.	2,500,000	-	-	-
5	Changing of unutilized ablutions into Academic space at EXR	1,900,000	-	-	-
6	Planned infrastructure to accommodate new enrolment plan	5,500,000	5,000,000	9,500,000	9,500,000
7	Planned infrastructure for post graduate refurbishment	4,500,000	4,500,000	-	-
SUPPORT SERVICES		1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
8	Needs identified Support services facilities	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
STUDENT FACILITIES		4,500,000	4,500,000	3,500,000	1,500,000
9	Agriculture lift, Sasol Library Lift	4,500,000	4,500,000	3,500,000	1,500,000
ART/THEATRES		1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
10	Scaena	-	-	-	-
11	Wynand Mouton	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
LANDSCAPING		2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
12	Landscaping (water wise gardens, infill areas and outside learning areas)	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
ROAD– AND TRANSPORT SYSTEMS		3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
13	Road Annual Infrastructure work	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
INFRASTRUCTURE AND LARGE ASSET PERSEVERANCE PROJECTS		45,650,000	32,000,000	42,600,000	42,200,000
14	Electrical High voltage system (11kV Network)	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,200,000	4,400,000
15	Electrical network: Upgrading of electrical work in buildings to comply wit	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,200,000	4,400,000
16	New air conditioning general areas (Lecture Hall and Laboratories)	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,200,000	5,400,000
17	Energy saving initiate to individual Air Conditioners – once–off	2,500,000	-	-	-
18	End of life Major Airconditioning Refurbishments	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	-
19	Chemistry Lab extractions	11,500,000	-	-	-
20	Sustainability, ESG, Grey water, recycling and off–grid solutions	5,000,000	15,000,000	15,000,000	-
21	Solar PV 7. grey water and recycling initiatives (2026)	12,000,000	-	-	-
22	Health & Safety	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
23	Safety to Laboratories	2,650,000	-	-	-
24	Asbestos identification and removal	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	2,000,000

CAPITAL BUDGET 2026 AND PROPOSED CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2027 – 2029		2026	2027	2028	2029
GENERAL		23,908,000	27,250,000	25,750,000	25,750,000
25	Additional infrastrucure requests by Faculties and Departments	9,000,000	9,400,000	9,400,000	9,400,000
26	Signage	500,000	2,000,000	500,000	500,000
27	General Planning and managing of projects	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
28	Furniture general areas	850,000	850,000	850,000	850,000
29	Security systems to buildings	4,000,000	4,000,000	4.000.000	4,000,000
30	Sport Infrastructure	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
31	Provision for Unforeseen expenses	5,558,000	7,000,000	7,000,000	7,000,000
TOTAL BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS		**105,458,000**	**96,250,000**	**106,350,000**	**100,950,000**

B: QWAQWA CAMPUS					
		24,800,000	27,500,000	30,050,000	27,750,000
1	General: Emergency	500,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1.000.000
2	Upgrading of Civil infrastructure (water and sewer)	1,000,000	1,250,000	–	–
3	Electrical network: Upgrading of electrical work in buildings (2025 - Mend)	–	1,500,000	1,800,000	2,000,000
4	Landscaping (water wise gardens, infill areas and outside learning areas)	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
5	Accessibility TK Mopedi Lift – 2026	1,500,000	–	–	–
6	New examination building – 2026	12,000,000	10,000,000	–	–
7	Revitalisation of Library Interior spaces	1,000,000	–	–	–
8	Planned infrastructure to accommodate new enrolement plan	1,000,000	1,500,000	11,500,000	11,500,000
9	Planned infrastructure for post graduate refurbishment	1,000,000	1,500,000	–	–
10	Sustainability, ESG and off–grid solutions		5,000,000	5,000,000	–
11	Grey water recycling	2,000,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	–
12	Provision for Unforeseen expenses	1,550,000	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,000,000
13	Security systems to buildings	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
14	Sport Infrastructure	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
15	Additional infrastrucure requests by Faculties and Departments.	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
TOTAL QWAQWA CAMPUS		**24,800,000**	**27,500,000**	**30,050,000**	**27,750,000**

C: SOUTH CAMPUS					
		1,750,000	1,750,000	1,750,000	1,750,000
1	General: Emergency	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
2	Sustainability. ESG and off–grid solutions	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000
3	Security systems to buildings Expansion of Protection Services offices				
4	Sport Infrastructure	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
5	Veterinary School- Planned Infrastructure.				
TOTAL SOUTH CAMPUS		**1,750,000**	**1,750,000**	**1,750,000**	**1,750,000**

CAPITAL BUDGET 2026 AND PROPOSED CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2027 – 2029				
	2026	2027	2028	2029
SUMMARY				
BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS	105,458,000	96,250,000	106,350,000	100,950,000
– Capital	97,958,000	88,750,000	98,850,000	93,450,000
– Security	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000
– Sport	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
QWAQWA CAMPUS	24,800,000	27,500,000	30,050,000	27,750,000
– Capital	22,800,000	25,500,000	28,050,000	25,750,000
– Security	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
– Sport	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
SOUTH CAMPUS	1,750,000	1,750,000	1,750,000	1,750,000
– Capital	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
– Security	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
– Sport	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000
GRAND TOTAL	132,008,000	125,500,000	138,150,000	130,450,000

DEFFERED MAINTENANCE FUNDING REQUEST 2026			
INFRASTRUCTURE – ACADEMIC BUILDINGS			
Description	Bloemfontein Campus	Qwaqwa Campus	South Campus
1	Replacement of Security fencing – final phase	9,100,000	–	–
2	Physic Building Internal Refurbishment	950,000	–	–
3	Boydon deferred maintenance	250,000	–	–
4	Paradys – deferred maintenance	1,500,000	–	–
MINOR DEFERRED MAINTENANCE TO VARIOUS ACADEMIC BUILDINGS				
5	Biology minor paintwork to water damaged areas	–	300,000	–
6	South Block–Minor internal Paintwork	250,000	–	–
7	North Block Internal paintwork	225,000	–	–
8	Mabaleng – Internal defeered maintenance	300,000	–	–
9	FGG–Block A Floor Coverings	250,000	–	–
10	FGG–Circulation Areas refurbishment	240,000	–	–
11	Equitas – Circulation areas refurbishment	250,000	–	–
12	Claerhout – Internal paintwork studios	235,000	–	–
13	Agriculture halls Internal paintwork	455,000	–	–
14	Service Quarters	400,000	–	–
15	Guard houses internal Paint	255,000	–	–
16	Various minor items	1,370,000	–	–
17	Financial Planning Law – External Fascade	350,000	–	–
18	External Fascade to greenhouse in front of Agriculture	150,000	–	–
19	FGG External Façade and roof	2,250,000	–	–
20	EMS Building External Façade, Steelwork and Aluminium windows	1,500,000	–	–
21	Animal research building	750,000	–	–
22	Odeion South Entrance and offices Renovations	1,680,000	–	–
23	Kopanong Aluminium Doors Replacement	250,000	–	–
24	Biology Building Circulation Areas and laboratories	1,800,000	–	–
25	Old NAS Building Renovations	–	1,500,000	–
26	Renovations to L Venues	–	2,650,000	–

	DEFFERED MAINTENANCE FUNDING REQUEST 2026			
	INFRASTRUCTURE – ACADEMIC BUILDINGS			
	Description	**Bloemfontein Campus**	**Qwaqwa Campus**	**South Campus**
27	Intsika Building Circulation Areas Floor coverings replacement	–	1,250,000	–
28	Various minor items	–	250,000	–
INFRASTRUCTURE				
29	Replacement of asbestos water pipes Phase 3 of 5	1,500,000	–	–
30	Waterproofing concrete roofs, gutters and downpipes	1,000,000	–	–
MECHANICAL INFRASTUCTURE				
31	NAS Building Extraction	–	750,000	–
32	Teachers Training Auditorium HVAC refurbishment	1,500,000	–	–
33	Equitas HVAC refurbishment	750,000	–	–
34	Moot Court HVAC refurbishment – end of life	500,000	–	–
35	Visual Media Hib HVAC refurbishment	500,000	–	–
ELECTRICAL INFRASTRUCTURE				
36	Mini-substation replacement *BOK, MS2.1, MS1.1*	2,500,000	2,000,000	1,850,000
37	Generator Consolidation *Stabilis, vd Merwe Scholz, WWG, Physics, Geology*	2,500,000	–	–
38	Substation refurbishment *Francois Retief Block E substation*	3,500,000	–	–
39	Sport Lighting End-of-life	1,500,000	–	–
Total		**40,810,000**	**8,400,000**	**1,850,000**

	SUMMARY:	2026
1	Bloemfontein Campus	40,810,000
2	QwaQwa Campus	8,400,000
3	South Campus	1,850,000
	TOTAL	**51,060,000**

Housing and Residence Affairs Deferred Maintenance

In 2025 University Estates compiled a residence condition assessment report. Residences in conditions 4 and 5 are being prioritised in 2025 and 2026.

	HRA BUDGET 2026 AND PROPOSED BUDGETS FOR 2027 – 2029	2026	2027	2028	2029
A: BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS					
	TOTAL BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS	39,000,000	25,313,625	20,273,250	21,111,750
1	Vergeert-my-nie eaves ceilings and paintwork external	1,500,000	-	-	-
2	Karee external fascade	650,000	-	-	-
3	Beyers Nauide extemal Fascade	2,050,000	-	-	-
4	Fire Detection - Welwitcia & Tsweleopele	1,600,000	-	-	-
5	Fire Detection - Abraham Fischer & Villa Bravado	1,600,000	-	-	-
6	Toa Mageuzi Structural refurbishment and general paintwork	3,900,000	-	-	-
7	Armentum Re-utilze of unused spaces	1,950,000	-	-	-
8	Welwitchia roofs repairwork and replacement of eaves ceilings	1,500,000	-	-	-
9	Twelopele roofs repairwork and replacement of eaves ceilings	1,500,000	-	-	-
10	Madelief roofs repairwork and replacement of eaves ceilings	1,500,000	-	-	-
11	Akasia roofs repairwork and replacement of eaves ceilings	1,500,000	-	-	-
12	Site works andsocial spaces/quartyards	1,900,000	-	-	-
13	Various minor defered maintenance items to different residence	4,500,000	-	-	-
14	Asbestos Removal and remedial work	2,200,000	-	-	-
15	Kestel External Fascade and waterproofing	3,000,000	-	-	-
16	Batroom Extractions to all residences	1,000,000	-	-	-
17	Arista /Legatum dayresidences	1,350,000	-	-	-
18	Armentum External fascade, structural work	3,500,000	-	-	-
19	Karee Annex Ablutions	1,150,000	-	-	-
20	Marula Ablutions	1,150,000	-	-	-
21	Armentum Internal	-	6,500,000	-	-
22	Emily Internal, electrical supply and heaters	-	6,800,000	-	-
23	Lehakwe internal, electrical supply and heaters and roofs	-	7,800,000	-	-
24	Maroela Internal Upgrading	-	2,200,000	-	-
25	Wag-n-biejie Heaters	-	1,500,000	-	-
26	Various minor defered maintenance items to different residences	-	513,625	-	-
27	Soetdoring roofs repairwork and replacement of eaves ceilings	-	-	1,500,000	-
28	Steyn Residence and post grad accomodation	-	-	9,273,250	-
29	Twleopele Complete	-	-	9,500,000	-
30	Welwitchia Complete	-	-	-	11,500,000
31	Vergeert-my-nie Complete	-	-	-	9,611,750
32	Kestel Complete	-	-	-	-
33	Abraham Fisher	-	-	-	-

HRA BUDGET 2026 AND PROPOSED BUDGETS FOR 2027 – 2029				
	2026	2027	2028	2029
B: QWAQWA CAMPUS				
TOTAL QWAQWA CAMPUS	**4,000,000**	**4,824,200**	**5,427,225**	**6,633,275**
1 Fire Detection	-	860,000	-	-
2 Bathroom Extractions	400,000	–	–	–
3 Defered Maintenance to Bathrooms and passages	2,740,000	–	–	–
4 Residence Hector Peterson	-	4,824,200	–	–
5 Residence Peter Mokaba	-	–	5,427,225	–
6 Tsimolong Residence	-	–	–	6,633,275
7 OR Tamo	-	–	–	–
C: SOUTH CAMPUS				
TOTAL SOUTH CAMPUS	**1,500,000**	**–**	**–**	**–**
1 Fire detection Legae	860,000	2,000,000	–	–
2 Defered Maintenance (Tiles/paintwork)	640,000	–	–	–
3 Varios Items Liberty	–	2,000,000	–	–
4 Various Items Toka	–	–	–	3,000,000
SUMMARY				
Bloemfontein Campus	39,000,000	25,313,625	20,273,250	21,111,750
Qwaqwa Campus	4,000,000	4,824,200	5,427,225	6,633,275
South Campus	1,500,000	2,000,000	–	3,000,000
GRAND TOTAL	**44,500,000**	**32,137,825**	**25,700,475**	**30,745,025**

Institutional Risk Register

Table 3 below shows the top institutional risks for 2026 onwards, as of September 2025. Risks are linked to strategic objectives and controls and a summary of action plans to mitigate the identified risks in Table 3.

Table 3: Top Institutional Risks 2026

No.	UFS Goal	Risk description	Overall Inherent (Impact x Likelihood)		Controls	Control effectiveness	Residual risk (Inherent rating x Control effectiveness)	Summary of action plans
1	4. Promote stewardship and prioritisation of institutional resources for strategic intent 4.3: Increasing our research and innovation competitiveness	Failure to increase our research and innovation competitiveness	4	4	• Designated funding for IP Commercialisation and Industry Engagement • Workshops to equip staff with the skills to apply for grant funding. • Industry mentorship programme to deepen engagement with industry • Improved visibility of UFS researchers outputs through ORCID and Open Access • Co-ordinate visits with Sponsors and Industry to show case UFS skills and potential for collaborations • Spin Out companies established to commercialise UFS research.	Satisfactory	High	• UFS to register on the TIA I Bridge Portal • DRD website to advertise UFS expertise, services, accredited labs and infrastructure. • Dedicated personnel for grant writing and applications • Set parameters for research chairs and centres of excellence

No.	UFS Goal	Risk description	Overall Inherent (Impact x Likelihood)		Controls	Control effectiveness	Residual risk (Inherent rating x Control effectiveness)	Summary of action plans
2	Goal 4: Promote stewardship and the prioritization of institutional resources for strategic intent 4.2: Ensuring the principles of investment to enable academic excellence with particular emphasis on research and postgraduate activity	Share of income from advancement activities stagnate due to economic climate and our inability to raise funds	4	4	• Institutional Advancement has a CRM system, which tracks interactions by fundraisers and other staff. • The system also tracks contributions received to keep abreast of trends.	Satisfactory	High	• Retain existing donors, renew lapsed donors, acquire new donors. • Review IA structure to optimise fundraising capacity. • Strategic approaches to SETAs and other high-probability prospects alongside partner departments such as DRD and Financial Aid. • Each fundraiser has prospects including existing donors, lapsed donors and new donors. • Advancement is working with colleagues to attract international funding.
3	4: Promote stewardship and the prioritization of institutional resources for strategic intent 4.1: Ensuring the efficiency of the nonacademic support structures and systems	Off campus incidents of crime affecting students	4	5	• Service Level Agreements with service providers • Student Safety and Security Collaboration Forum	Satisfactory	High	• Continued collaboration and co-operation with the SAPS. • Continued collaboration with other private security companies and enhanced co-operation with neighborhood Associations. • Continued UFS participation and support to the CPFs. • Manage and expanded the Student Crime Stop WhatsApp groups. • Crime awareness campaigns • Student Safety Committee revitalised and monthly discussions with SRC members. • Safety representatives appointed to assist with awareness campaigns. • Focus to be placed on additional technical security measures to be deployed off-campus.

No.	UFS Goal	Risk description	Overall Inherent (Impact x Likelihood)		Controls	Control effectiveness	Residual risk (Inherent rating x Control effectiveness)	Summary of action plans
4	3. Advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS 3.3: Becoming a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds	Difficulty to attract and retain quality fee-paying and students from minority groups	3	5	• Recruitment and Admission Strategy implemented. • Approved Admissions Policy • Faculty rules • Approved Enrolment plans • Prospectus in place • Offer management	Satisfactory	High	• Recruitment strategy targeting quintile 5, private schools and homeschooling communities implemented. • Department of Communication and Marketing (DCM) to profile UFS as an institution of choice to Quintile 5 schools, minority groups and fee-paying students. • Intensify the Faculty marketing plans. • Implement enrolment planning as a key driver to maintain an optimal balance between intake and capacity. • Cross-departmental integration and collaboration to encourage effective oversight of the professional, ethical and shared service delivery at each touch point between application and enrollment. • Restructuring of undergraduate qualifications to prepare students for postgraduate research • Promote post graduate student funding in key programs

No.	UFS Goal	Risk description	Overall Inherent (Impact x Likelihood)		Controls	Control effectiveness	Residual risk (Inherent rating x Control effectiveness)	Summary of action plans
5	Promote stewardship and the prioritization of institutional resources for strategic intent 4.1: Ensuring the efficiency of the nonacademic support structures and systems	Inability to respond to Cyber attacks	5	5	– ICT Services adopted the Critical Security Controls (CIS) framework which is developed and maintained by SANS. The Critical Security Controls are a recommended set of actions for cyber defense that provide specific and actionable ways to stop today's most pervasive and dangerous attacks. The most profound controls implemented by ICT includes • Global Protect VPN • DKIM and DMARC (email security) • CASB cloud security on O365 • ApexSQL Database Activity Monitor • Backup Encryption • JAMF Drive Encryption on Apple Devices • File Server Auditing • Image Now Retention and Audit • SSL Decryption on Gateway • Endpoint detection and Response (Cybereason) • Oracle Database Activity Monitor	Strong	High	In progress: • Trusted and untrusted network architecture to align with the services orientation • Desktop Encryption • ISMS Policies • Purview investigation • Chorinicle SIEM

No.	UFS Goal	Risk description	Overall Inherent (Impact x Likelihood)		Controls	Control effectiveness	Residual risk (Inherent rating x Control effectiveness)	Summary of action plans

6	4. Promote stewardship and the prioritization of institutional resources for strategic intent
	
	4.2: Ensuring the principles of investment to enable academic excellence with particular emphasis on research and postgraduate activity
		Potential declining subsidy income due to inability to meet funded TIU's	4	4	• Enrolment planning
					• Ensuring sufficient reserves in the stabilization reserves
					• Budget model
					• Financial Sustainability Workgroup establish to oversee short term medium- and long-term sustainability and interventions
					• Long term interventions
					  - Academic and financial viability
					  - Optimisation of PQM
					  - Workload model
					  - Optimisation of third-stream revenue
					  - Size and shape model
						Satisfactory	High	• Enrollment planning – 5 year optimized enrollment plan is developed and widely consulted. Presented to DHET on 9/5/2025 and approved by Council end of June.
								• Financial Sustainability Workgroup interventions relating to Workload model / Optimised PQM and academic and financial viability ongoing.
								• Continue stakeholder engagement with DHET; NSFAS; Deans and other key role players.

7	4. Promote stewardship and the prioritization of institutional resources for strategic intent 4.2: Ensuring the principles of investment to enable academic excellence with particular emphasis on research and postgraduate activity	Over dependency on government funding	4	4	• Institutionally agreed upon target for third fourth and fifth stream revenue • Quarterly review and engagements with Faculties to track progress • Dashboards to faculties to monitor revenue against targets in real time • Strategic institutional engagement of how the balance between self-paying and doner dependent students can be improved.	Satisfactory	High	• Enablement of faculties and support services department to review progress against targets in real time. • Continuous engagement with Faculties • Review institutional structures most beneficial to maximise alternative income streamsMonthly financial reporting to Faculties

No.	UFS Goal	Risk description	Overall Inherent (Impact x Likelihood)		Controls	Control effectiveness	Residual risk (Inherent rating x Control effectiveness)	Summary of action plans
8	4. Promote stewardship and the prioritization of institutional resources for strategic intent 4.2: Ensuring the principles of investment to enable academic excellence with particular emphasis on research and postgraduate activity	Credit Risk of student debtors	4	3	• Fees rule year-book, with terms and conditions • If fees are overdue with more than R2000, then official academic records will not be issued • Formal collection process that focusses on pro-active engagement. e.g. sms, emails, telephone calls • Credit Management strategy/plan for the year outlining the collection actions. • Formal debt management strategy developed	Strong	High	• Continue to monitor level of debt continuously through stakeholder engagement (NSFAS)
9	3. Advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS 3.3: Becoming a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds	Failure to meet enrolment targets (local and international)	4	4	• Implementation of Enrolment Management, Enrolment Capping and Offer Management procedures • Use of the Senate Enrolment Management Committee to ensure strategic oversight of Enrolment Management • Handover of Enrolment Planning to Registrar in advance of the start of the cycle • Enrolment Management of offers, with targets set in advance and monitored • Regular operational meetings (monthly) between SAS and Faculties	Satisfactory	High	• Overhaul of Online Application System – Completed

Monitoring and Evaluation

The APP serves as the framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028. The APP will be monitored on a quarterly basis and evaluated and reported on bi-annually through the Mid-Year Performance Report and the Annual Report submitted to the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation after consultation with and approval by Council, as per the Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions, issued in terms of the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997) as amended, prescribed in terms of section 41, read with section 69 of the Higher Education Act 1997.

These regulations prescribe the following, which are of immediate concern to councils of universities:

- These regulations apply to all public higher education institutions.
- Each public higher education institution must
  - produce a Strategic Plan and update it at least every five years;
  - submit an Annual Performance Plan to the DHET every year as further provided for in these regulations, which must be consistent with the MTEF period; must contain performance targets, and should be aligned to the Strategic Plan;
  - identify a core set of indicators to monitor institutional performance;
  - adopt a mid-year reporting system and submit a Mid-Year Performance Report as further provided for in these regulations; and
  - ensure alignment between the Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan (APP), Annual Report, budget documents, and Mid-Year Performance Report.

The APP is developed on an annual basis through a consultative process. The UFS has the prerogative to carefully consider and select objectives and targets from the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, taking into account the changing higher education landscape and novel circumstances that may impact the university's choices, while maintaining alignment between the Strategic Plan and APP.

The APP serves as the foundation for performance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. It includes indicators, indicator targets, and planned activities that will be monitored quarterly by the university's Executive Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, which will steer the strategic direction and execution transparently and engagingly. The deliberations and progress reports of these stakeholders will be monitored biannually through the Mid-Year Performance Report and Annual Report. Finally, bi-annual assessment of targets and activities will be effected through performance contracting with executives, deans, and senior management.

The performance management system of the UFS remains the key management tool to drive strategy execution.

MR DAVID NOKO
Chairperson of the UFS Council

Annual Performance Plan

2026–2028

University of the Free State

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