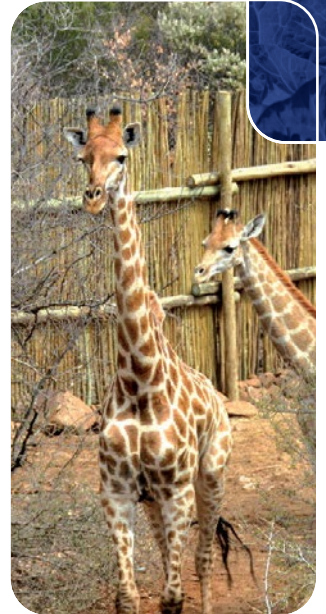


UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE Institutional Profile



2026

www.ufs.ac.za

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



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



Foreword

At the University of the Free State (UFS), we are committed to contributing meaningfully to **Responsible Societal Futures**, using our knowledge and resources to build a more just, sustainable, and humane society.

We strive to be a university with a consistent outward focus, delivering profound results – building on past achievements while constantly transforming ourselves to stay relevant in the dynamic and ever-changing international higher education sphere.

Built on the values of *Accountability, Care, Excellence, Innovation and Impact, Sustainability, and Social Justice*, our university community constitutes an entrepreneurial knowledge ecosystem where brilliant minds converge to address humanity's most pressing problems.

We are proud of our well-rounded graduates who are equipped with academic and personal skills that make them sought-after professionals in workplaces around the world, as well as responsible, society-focused future leaders.

We are student-centred, innovative, research-led, regionally engaged, and globally relevant. We lead through service with impact. And we walk with purpose.

Welcome to the University of the Free State.

Prof Hester C. Klopper

Vice-Chancellor and Principal

UFS in numbers



Established in
1904



Student
registrations (2026)
39 367



Students
(2025 graduates)
9 804



Staff
4 955

3 campuses

7 faculties



Registered
students

38 414
contact

953
distance

39 367
total



Faculty of
Economic and
Management
Sciences



Faculty of
Education



Faculty of
Health
Sciences



Faculty of
The
Humanities



Faculty of
Law



Faculty of
Natural and
Agricultural
Sciences



Faculty of
Theology
and Religion

University rankings



25th in Africa in the
THE World University
Rankings 2026



9th place in the
QS World University
Rankings: Sub-Saharan
Africa 2026



Top 200 globally for SDG 10:
Reduced Inequalities
(THE Impact
Rankings 2026)

Across all three campuses, high-tech solar plants have transformed sunlight into a sustainable energy solution for the UFS. With the first pilot plant in 2017 and rapid expansion since 2022 to a total of 8 MW solar PV, the university has also implemented strategic battery storage installations to mitigate the effects of power outages. Together, these systems have already saved more than R99,75 million, significantly reducing the impact of load shedding and shrinking the institution's carbon footprint.



The UFS has turned water-wise thinking into an institution-wide reality across its three campuses. Outdoor spaces have been designed with indigenous plants, smart irrigation, and greywater systems, including the full irrigation of the Bloemfontein Campus sports fields with greywater. Rainwater harvesting, waterless urinals, and pressure-controlled systems save resources, complemented by e-waste and paper recycling initiatives. Additionally, 150 trees were planted last year, securing a greener future for the campus.

Our story

For more than 120 years, the University of the Free State has been shaping futures. Building on this strong foundation, we prepare students for a world that is evolving faster than ever. Guided by our commitment to *Walking With Purpose*, we pursue academic excellence, holistic transformation, and a future in which the UFS stands as a beacon of innovation and hope for Africa and the global community.

Grounded in our people, driven by partnership, and focused on responsible societal futures, we are embracing bold renewal to strengthen our place among this continent's leading universities and to shape meaningful change in the world.



Our vision

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



Our mission

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



Our values

The UFS subscribes to the values of excellence, impact, accountability, care, social justice, and sustainability, which are realised through the conduct of the wider university community that shapes and informs our culture and provides a framework for our actions and decisions.



Our campuses

The University of the Free State brings learning to life through its campuses in central South Africa. In Bloemfontein, the Bloemfontein and South Campuses share space in the bustling heart of the Free State, while further east – surrounded by mountains – the Qwaqwa Campus offers a more scenic setting. This multi-campus setup provides an integrated higher education experience, connecting people from different places and backgrounds.



On the **Bloemfontein Campus**, students from diverse backgrounds come together to learn, grow, and build their future in one of seven faculties – from first year to postgraduate level. It is a place where old buildings and modern design stand side by side, where unique artworks catch your eye, and where state-of-the-art research, learning, teaching, and sports facilities work hand in hand to shape the full student experience.



The **Qwaqwa Campus** is a dynamic and vibrant centre of learning for students from nearby towns and neighbouring provinces. Rooted in its rural setting, the campus plays an active role in driving local socio-economic development. Through relevant academic programmes and focused research, it works closely with communities to unlock opportunities, support entrepreneurship, and contribute to sustainable job creation in the region.



The **South Campus** is a hub of innovation, home to the Blended Learning Innovation Support and Services (BLISS) within the Centre for Teaching and Learning, where digital tools, multimedia production, and academic support strengthen the university's blended learning approach. It also hosts the BEd Foundation Phase programme, preparing future teachers for young learners, and will soon establish a School of Veterinary Sciences offering a Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) to meet professional standards for veterinary education.



Our faculties

The UFS is home to seven faculties offering quality programmes, led by passionate and experienced staff members who are focused on making a real-world impact in their fields.



Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences equips students with the skills and knowledge to thrive in the workplace and contribute as active citizens. Whether you are aiming to build a career in finance, accounting, or management, this faculty offers programmes designed to prepare you for success.



Exceptional programmes:

- **Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) in Finance:** This programme carries Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) accreditation, meaning it meets the high standards set by the CFA Institute – a leader in finance education.
- **Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting and Bachelor of Accounting:** These programmes are accredited by several top professional bodies, including the following:
 - South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)
 - South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA)



- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
- South African Institute of Taxation (SAIT)

This ensures that they meet strict professional standards, helping graduates qualify for respected accounting careers.



Excellence in teaching and research:

- **SARChI Research Chair in Higher Education and Human Development:** Led by Prof Melanie Walker, this research chair uses the capabilities approach to explore key issues in education and human development in South Africa. In the coedited book *Low-income students, human development and higher education in South Africa: Opportunities, obstacles and outcomes*, she and her colleagues unpack the challenges and opportunities faced by low-income students in their pursuit of higher education.
- **SARChI Research Chair in Urban-Regional Economics:** Headed by Prof Ivan Turok – one of South Africa's most cited social scientists – this chair studies how cities and

regions drive economic growth and development. One of its contributions was a broad overview of the South African space economy and the role of metropolitan areas in the national economy.



UFS Business School

The UFS Business School is a national leader in management and leadership training, fully accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). Our programmes combine expert facilitators with the latest training methods to deliver practical, result-driven learning.

Short learning programmes offered by the UFS Business School include the following:

- New Managers Programme
- Management Development Programme
- Senior Management Development Programme
- Executive Development Programme
- Project Management Programmes



The Faculty of Education plays a key role in shaping future educators by preparing pre-service teachers with a strong academic foundation for the classroom. We also support in-service teachers through continuous learning and development.

Exceptional programmes:

From undergraduate degrees to postgraduate certificate and diploma, honours, master's, and doctoral study programmes, we offer a wide range of study opportunities without selection barriers. These include the following:

- Bachelor of Education in Foundation, Intermediate, or Senior and FET Phases
- Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education
- Bachelor of Education Honours
- Master of Education
- PhD in Education

Excellence in teaching and research:

- **SANRAL Chair in Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology Education:** Led by Prof Loyiso Jita, this chair supports teacher training and mentoring, with a strong focus on building schools into centres of excellence. It also supervises a growing group of master's and PhD students, while contributing valuable research in mathematics, science, and technology education.
- **ETDP-SETA Research Chair in Mathematics Education:** The ETDP-SETA Research Chair in Mathematics Education is a national initiative, supported by the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA). The chair's primary mandate is to strengthen South Africa's mathematics teaching and learning capacity by bridging the gap between cutting-edge research, technological innovation, and classroom practice. The chairholder is Prof Moeketsi Mosia.



We are proud of the highly skilled health professionals trained across our five schools:

- School of Clinical Medicine
- School of Biomedical Sciences
- School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
- School of Pathology
- School of Nursing

Exceptional programmes:

- **Division of Health Sciences Education (DHSE):** Supports excellence in healthcare and scholarship by building a community of forward-thinking, adaptable healthcare educators. The DHSE focuses on postgraduate programmes, research on health professions education, and faculty development to advance research, educational, and leadership expertise, with a strong emphasis on innovation.
- **Division of Public Health:** Recently launched by the Faculty of Health Sciences, this division expands the academic footprint with new postgraduate offerings at both master's and doctoral levels. To further support academic excellence, the faculty opened a state-of-the-art Postgraduate Hub – a dedicated space designed to serve postgraduate students across all levels within the faculty.
- **Surgical Innovation:** In collaboration with partners, the faculty became one of the first in Southern Africa to introduce a surgical robot system at the Universitas Hospital in Bloemfontein, South Africa.
- **Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit (School of Biomedical Sciences):** Offers hands-on training opportunities for medical and other healthcare students. Using human patient simulators, task trainers, and simulated patients, students are provided with a safe space to practise, refine, and master key healthcare skills.

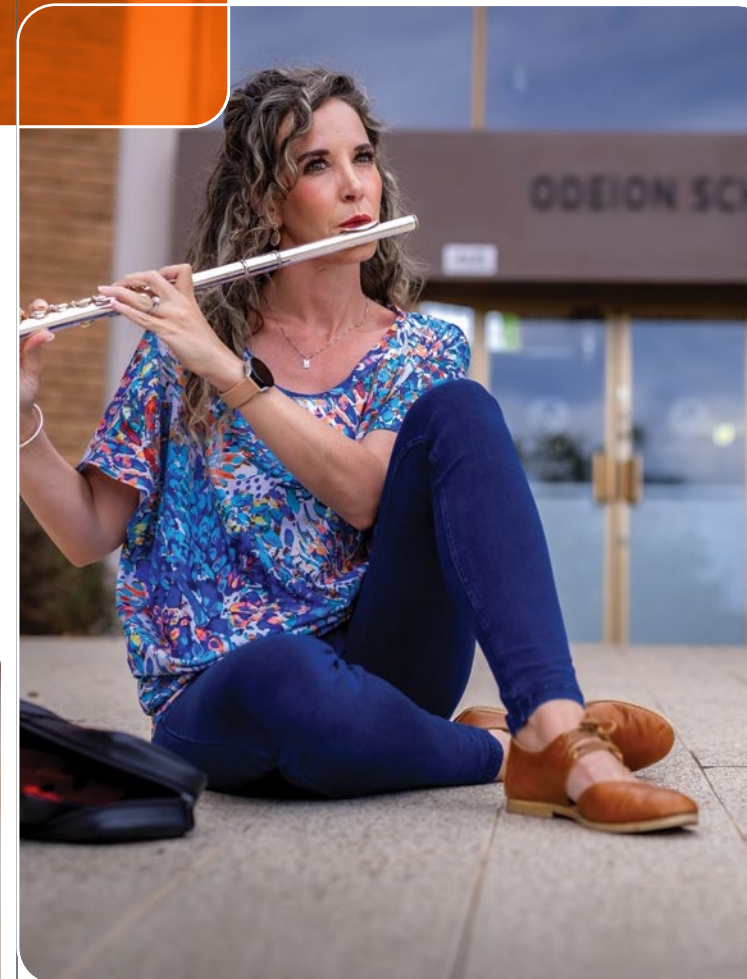
- **School of Nursing – SPACE:** Home to the state-of-the-art simulation facilities known as the SPACE, a modern learning environment for tomorrow's nurses.

Excellence in teaching and research:

- **SARCHI Research Chair in Vector-borne and Zoonotic Pathogens:** Led by Prof Felicity Burt, this team focuses on host immune responses to zoonotic infections and arboviruses, while raising awareness of these diseases. The chair also develops tools for surveillance programmes, contributing to understanding these pathogens and their public health implications.
- **Next Generation Sequencing Unit:** A high-tech research facility focused on genomic sequencing, providing advanced services for researchers and valuable practical training opportunities for visiting and internal scientific interns.
- **African Medicines Innovations and Technologies Development (AMITD):** Based in the Department of Pharmacology, this platform recruits and employs top skills across the research, development, and herbal-medicine manufacturing value chains. It includes state-of-the-art GLP and ISO 17025-accredited laboratories, serving as a centre of excellence for the government, the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the African Union (AU). It has also been earmarked as the BRICS Natural Medicines Institute for research, teaching, and training on natural products.
- **Robert WM Frater Cardiovascular Research Centre:** One of the leading cardiovascular research platforms in sub-Saharan Africa, offering interdisciplinary training and research for clinicians and scientists in cardiovascular and thoracic surgery and related fields.
- **Biobank:** A centrally governed research platform that collects, processes, and securely stores high-quality human biological samples linked to clinical data. The biobank strengthens locally relevant research by providing well-characterised biospecimens for ethically approved studies,

supporting postgraduate training, improving research efficiency, and enhancing the university's competitiveness in attracting grants and partnerships. It serves as a long-term infrastructure for African-led science, grounded in strong ethics, participant protection, and regional health priorities.

- **Postgraduate Simulation Unit:** The Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Free State has established a cutting-edge Postgraduate Simulation Unit, housed within the School of Clinical Medicine, to advance postgraduate medical education, clinical skills development, and healthcare innovation. The unit supports postgraduate medical students, registrars, and specialist trainees in a realistic, immersive environment, aiming to enhance clinical competence through technology-enhanced training.



Faculty of The Humanities

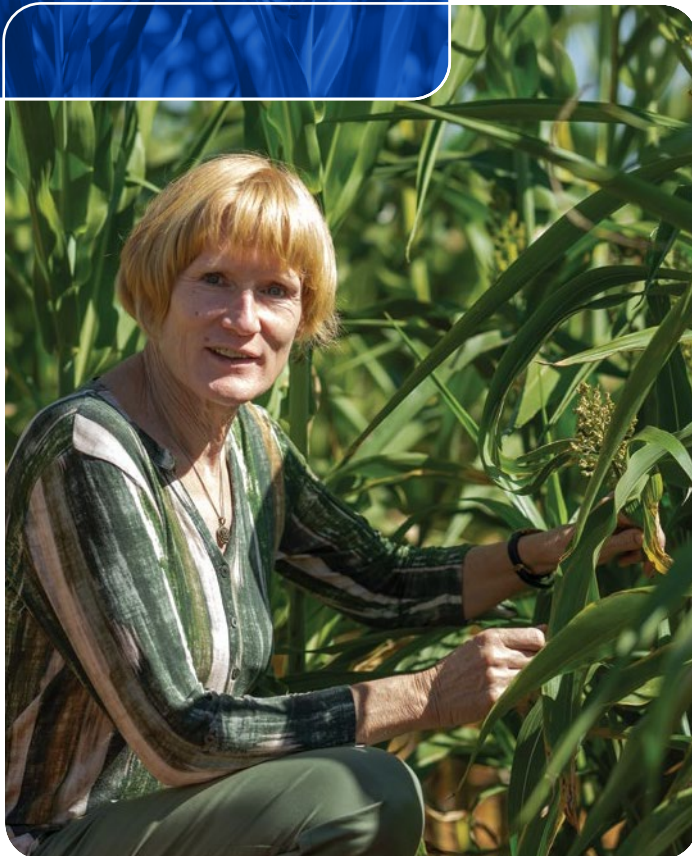
The Faculty of The Humanities is home to a rich mix of disciplines. Our graduates make a meaningful impact on society through knowledge, creativity, communication, and care – enriching communities through the arts, social services, and cultural understanding. The faculty also offers a variety of language programmes, including a highly regarded South African Sign Language programme.

Exceptional programmes:

- Two compulsory multidisciplinary Social Sciences modules help to inculcate specific graduate attributes in students and support the UFS' drive to decolonise the curriculum.

Excellence in teaching and research:

- **International Studies Group (ISG):** A globally recognised research group attracting PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and visiting academics who explore the histories of Central and Southern Africa in particular, and African and global history more generally.
- **Centre for Gender and Africa Studies:** An interdisciplinary postgraduate and research centre focused on critical postcolonial work, covering themes such as gender mainstreaming, peacekeeping, indigenous knowledge systems, and heritage.
- **Centre for Health Systems Research and Development:** Produces high-impact research to inform and improve health systems, including policies, strategies, priority programmes, and practices.
- **Unit for Professional Training and Service in the Behavioural Sciences (UNIBS):** Trains professionals in the field of psychology at registered counselling psychologist level, with additional public service and research functions.
- **Women Researchers in The Humanities (WoRiTH):** A supportive initiative aimed at growing the next generation of women researchers through mentorship and targeted interventions towards completing their PhD degrees.



Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

The Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences embraces a multidisciplinary way of thinking about education and research. With 25 divisions covering natural, agricultural, and building sciences, the faculty allows students to explore a wide range of study fields.



Exceptional programmes:

- **Master's and PhD in Architecture – with specialisation in Design:** A practice-based research programme, the first of its kind in South Africa.
- **BSc in Forensic Sciences – with specialisations in Forensic Genetics, Chemistry, Entomology, and Anthropology:** A career-focused programme specifically for police and forensic operations.
- **Agricultural studies:** With 15 undergraduate degree options, students gain practical experience at the Paradys Experimental Farm, where training includes dairy production, fermentation, and animal and crop sciences. The faculty also introduces students to modern agritech through close industry collaboration.



Excellence in teaching and research:

- **SARChI Research Chair in Pathogenic Yeasts:** Led by Prof Carolina Pohl-Albertyn, this chair explores bioactive lipids in pathogenic yeasts, focusing on fatty acids and immunomodulatory lipid metabolites. The Pathogenic Yeast Research Group brings together expertise in yeast molecular biology, lipid metabolism, and immune response.
- **SARChI Research Chair in Solid-state Luminescent and Advanced Materials:** Prof Hendrik C Swart works on improving luminescent materials for applications in flat panel displays, solar cells, solid-state lighting, dosimetry, and thermometry. This chair has advanced processes to synthesise and deposit thin films of semiconductor nanoparticles to enhance colour, luminescent intensity, and display lifetime.
- **SARChI Research Chair in Disease Resistance and Quality in Field Crops:** Prof Maryke Labuschagne trains MSc and PhD students across Africa, focusing on genetic improvement of staple crops. Students trained under this chair have released numerous new cultivars, contributing to food security across the continent.
- **SARChI Research Chair in Trophic Ecology:** Prof SandyLynn Steenhuisen investigates how plants and animals interact in sensitive mountain ecosystems. Her work examines pollination, invasive species, and climate impacts, revealing ecological connections that shape biodiversity. This chair strengthens global mountain research and informs conservation strategies across Southern Africa.
- **Centre for Microscopy:** Offers world-class electron microscopy equipment, enabling globally competitive research.
- **Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry:** Connects students with advanced equipment and industry partners for applied research in biogeochemistry and bioaugmentation.
- **Crop Research Platform:** Focuses on breeding crops with improved nutritional value to meet consumer and health demands.

- **Green Futures Hub:** Drives agricultural and environmental sustainability by connecting researchers with government, industry, and communities to co-create practical, nature-based solutions. It focuses on land rehabilitation, food and water security, and climate resilience.
- **Complex Systems Hub:** Equips multidisciplinary teams to address global challenges through advanced modelling, AI, and data-driven science, transforming complexity into opportunity.
- **Magic Lab (Merensky Group for Aerial Geological Image Classification):** Develops drone-based geological imaging in South Africa, with an emphasis on mineral and groundwater exploration.
- **Ecological Engineering Institute of Africa:** A network of academic, industry, and business leaders promoting cross-sector collaboration to address Africa's urgent sustainability challenges.
- **Afromontane Research Unit (Qwaqwa Campus):** Promotes research on Southern African mountains, strengthening the science-policy-practice interface through domestic and international partnerships.
- **SciLytica Laboratory:** This accredited lab provides quality-assured testing to a wide range of sectors, with expertise in trace-level detection within the biomedical, environmental, and applied sciences – while also advancing research solutions and commercially applicable development.

Research Chairs hosted by the UFS in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council and the Department of Agriculture:

- Climate Change Impacts and Mitigation in Agriculture
- Innovative Agro-Processing for Climate-Smart Food Systems
- Agriculture Risk Financing
- Sustainable Livestock Production
- Breeding of Climate-Resilient Vegetables and Grains
- Impact Assessment of Climate-Smart Interventions
- Communication for Innovation





The Faculty of Law is committed to academic excellence, social justice, and transformative legal education, and to producing graduates who are well equipped to shape the legal landscape of South Africa and abroad. This strong academic foundation is reflected in the faculty's growing recognition on the global stage. The university excelled in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject (Law), securing a position in the 301–400 band. This outcome underscores the UFS' expanded influence and continued progress in academic fields central to justice, governance, and societal impact.

Exceptional programmes:

The faculty offers a distinguished blend of academic rigour and practical relevance, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to engage confidently with legal systems. A key strength of the faculty is its **Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programme**, which bridges the gap between legal theory and professional practice. Through placements in courts, law firms, and prosecutors' offices, students gain valuable hands-on experience and industry exposure.

Students gain access to a comprehensive range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes covering critical areas of law, while also providing opportunities for specialisation in fields such as customary law, criminal law, medical law, environmental law, education law, alternative dispute resolution, human rights, and banking law. These programmes prepare students for diverse careers across the legal profession and beyond.

- Both the **LLB** and postgraduate qualifications open doors to diverse legal and non-legal careers where a deep understanding of law is essential.
- The **School of Financial Planning Law** continues to lead in its field, with the Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Planning recognised as a key stepping stone to becoming

a Certified Financial Planner (CFP®). The Advanced Diploma in Estate and Trust Administration, which is unique to the SFPL, is the necessary academic requirement for attaining the Fiduciary Practitioner of South Africa (FPSA®) designation from the Fiduciary Institute of Southern Africa, as well as the international Trust and Estate Practitioner (TEP) designation from the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP).

- The **Postgraduate Diploma in Labour Law (PGDLL)** supports specialisation in labour-related legal matters and reflects the faculty's drive to provide relevant, workforce-focused education.
- The university collaborates with the **Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA)** and key bargaining councils to offer a comprehensive Labour Dispute Resolution Practice programme integrated into the PGDLL, preparing students with in-demand dispute resolution skills.

Excellence in teaching and research: The faculty is anchored by three core academic departments: Mercantile Law, Private Law, and Public Law, and also comprises additional academic and professional units, including the following:

- **Free State Centre for Human Rights:** A vibrant focal point for scholarship, advocacy, and legal engagement at the intersection of human rights and social transformation. Its work explores poverty, democracy, and identity, drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives to drive meaningful change.
- **UFS Africa Reparation Hub (Department of Public Law):** Plays a leading role in shaping national and international dialogue on reparations for the wrongs caused by colonialism and apartheid. It serves as a central space for research, teaching, and advocacy on historical justice and redress.
- **Disability Rights Unit:** Advances the rights of persons with disabilities through research and advocacy, enhancing the implementation of international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the African Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



- **UFS Law Clinic:** Offers essential pro bono legal services, public impact litigation, community service learning, and clinical legal education opportunities. Strategically located in the judicial capital, the clinic combines professional legal services and community engagement with hands-on trial advocacy training for Law students.

Further initiatives, such as the Annual First-year Kopsie Moot Court Competition at the Supreme Court of Appeal, help to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world competencies. Senior Law students can take advantage of the opportunity to participate in various international and national moot court competitions.



Faculty of Theology and Religion

Rooted in Africa and engaged with the world, the Faculty of Theology and Religion offers programmes in both Theology and Religion Studies that prepare students for transformative leadership within faith communities and the broader society. Through responsible biblical interpretation, ethical and empathetic community engagement, and critical reflection on social issues, students are equipped to inspire hope and contribute to positive social change.

Postgraduate students benefit from a supportive academic environment and expert supervision across theological and religious disciplines. Master's and doctoral programmes encourage original research that engages African realities while contributing to global theological and religious scholarship through international collaborations and partnerships.

Exceptional programmes:

- **Bachelor of Divinity:** A professionally orientated degree developed in consultation with Christian denominations and widely recognised by churches and religious bodies. It prepares graduates for leadership and ministry in diverse professional and community contexts.
- **Postgraduate Diploma in Theology:** A multidisciplinary qualification that develops a student's knowledge of theology, with a focus on contextual interaction and ministerial skills.
- **Multi-religious curriculum:** The Department of Religion Studies offers a curriculum grounded in the scientific study of religion that promotes tolerance, plurality, and inclusion. Modules explore religion's sociological, historical, and comparative dimensions, equipping students to analyse its role in society using diverse theoretical approaches.



Excellence in teaching and research:

- The Faculty of Theology and Religion combines academic depth with practical application, using a blend of classroom, community-based, and online learning methods to create an engaging educational experience.
- Teaching is continuously updated to reflect relevant, contextual, and decolonial perspectives, preparing students to respond to real-world challenges.
- Research in the faculty engages critical theological and societal questions, with notable contributions in areas such as African Christianity, public theology, biblical studies, and the role of religion in contemporary society.



Learning and teaching

The UFS learning and teaching environment is constantly evolving, reshaping itself to meet the needs of a changing world and to equip students for impact in a global, digital, and diverse society. This plays a key role in positioning the university as a future-focused, high-performance institution with local relevance and international reach.

Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Our advanced initiatives are celebrated both nationally and internationally:

- High-impact practices (HIPs): Including the First-Year Seminar module (FYS), Academic Advising, Language and Literacy development, and the Academic Student Excellence Tutorial Programme (A_STEP). Powered by data analytics, these initiatives have reduced first-year dropout rates, improved undergraduate success rates, and narrowed achievement gaps between different groups.
- South African Surveys of Student Engagement (SASSE): Led by the UFS, this national initiative provides data for evidence-based change in learning, teaching, and student success.
- Central Academic Advising Office: Helps students align personal, academic, and career goals through initiatives such as GPS@UFS (Graduate Positioning Support@UFS). CTL also offers South Africa's only professional academic advising training programme.
- Academic staff development: Provides internationally benchmarked training in learning and teaching, including curriculum transformation, academic leadership, and blended learning that integrates the latest technology developments into the classroom.



- Digitally Enhanced, Engaging, Personalised Learning (DEEP Learning): Continuously improved to prepare desirable graduates for a responsible, sustainable future. This includes initiatives such as the Digital Skills and Competency Framework for all students, as well as the Senior Student Experience.

Study centres on campus

The UFS creates space for excellence. Literally. Across our three campuses, students have access to more than 2 000 study stations spread across close to 7 000 m², many of which are available 24/7. These spaces offer quiet corners, collaborative areas, and everything in between to support focused learning.

One standout example is the Modular Lecturing Space and Assessment Centre on the Bloemfontein Campus – a flexible, future-facing facility. Among the facilities offered are spaces for large and small-scale lectures or group work that can be innovatively converted as needed. There is also an aesthetically pleasing communal area where students can pause and study in groups around tables, with a laptop-friendly study ledge running the length of the space, promoting optimal engagement in learning.

The Kovsie Phahamisa Academy (KPHA)

At the UFS, we foster lifelong learning for people from all academic backgrounds. The Kovsie Phahamisa Academy serves as a dynamic bridge between higher education, industry, and government, driving skills development, social transformation, and economic growth.

The KPHA's core mandate is to coordinate and oversee flexible, high-quality learning pathways. The wide range of short learning programmes is tailored to meet the evolving needs of the labour market and Africa's development priorities.

Key focus areas:

- **Partnerships:** Strong collaboration with corporate leaders, public sector bodies, and international agencies ensure that programmes are academically rigorous, practically

relevant, and designed to equip learners with future-ready skills in the UFS' key areas of expertise.

- **Inclusivity and access:** Leveraging technology to reach diverse learners across urban and rural areas, while aligning with national development frameworks and contributing to the knowledge economy.
- **Thought leadership:** Beyond training, the KPHA conducts applied research, offers effective training advice, and co-creates solutions with stakeholders for sustainable impact.
- **Catalyst role:** The KPHA positions itself not just as an education provider, but as a catalyst for creating lifelong learning ecosystems, employability, and global competitiveness.

Centre for Graduate Support

From funding opportunities to research development, the Centre for Graduate Support (CGS) is a key driver of postgraduate success at the UFS.

The CGS contributes to the research project of the university, offering excellent support in terms of research capacity development and academic writing. Both face-to-face and online offerings help to ensure that UFS postgraduate students receive researcher support in any part of the world. The centre also assists with the funding of postgraduate students. Furthermore, it facilitates postgraduate student applications, admissions, as well as the examination process.

The goal of the CGS is to create an enabling environment for postgraduate students and staff, and to track the progress of postgraduate students' journeys to assist UFS students in completing their studies within residence time. The centre is part of the Directorate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies and contributes towards the UFS knowledge enterprise.



Library and Information Services

The UFS Department of Library and Information Services (LIS) is a vibrant, tech-forward knowledge hub that empowers students and researchers to thrive in a connected, academic world.

Students have access to resources in five libraries across three campuses:

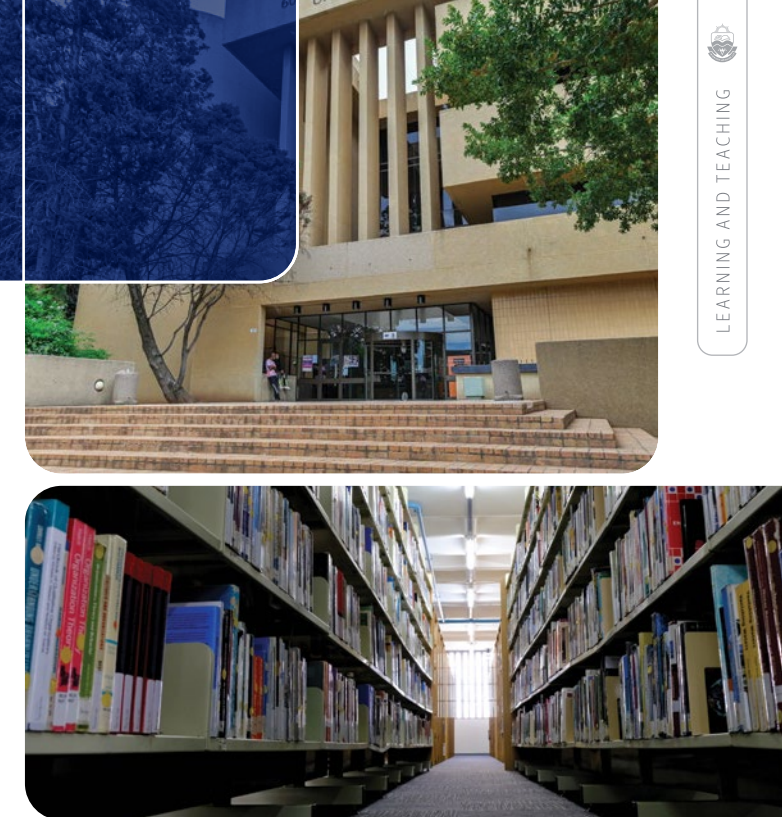
- UFS Sasol Library (Bloemfontein Campus)
- Health Sciences Library (Bloemfontein Campus)
- Music Library (Bloemfontein Campus)
- TK Mopeli Library (Qwaqwa Campus)
- Neville Alexander Library (South Campus)

Beyond traditional resources, LIS enhances digital literacy and innovation through fully equipped makerspaces on all three campuses.

Other specialised spaces include:

- The Postgraduate Research Unit with highly qualified librarians supporting researchers throughout the research cycle.
- Archive for Contemporary Affairs and Africana, offering rare collections.
- Equipped learning commons with faculty-specific librarians supporting undergraduate programmes.
- Multifunctional rooms for teaching, learning, and research needs.
- Collaborative Space for remote education, tutoring, collaboration, content creation, meetings, socialisation, and studying.
- Digital Scholarship Centre with advanced technology to assist researchers with collaboration, software development, and other high-performance computing.
- Latest digital self-help services, including a library mobile app and self-check technologies and return chutes aligned with 4IR trends.
- Makerspace, a collaborative and creative workspace that provides visitors with tools, resources, and a supportive community to engage in making, learning, and innovation.

- The LisPod studio provides valuable insights on academic research, current affairs, information literacy, book recommendations, and author interviews. It enhances accessibility and enriches learning opportunities for all.
- Efficient acquisitions secure vital print books, e-books, multimedia, and academic journals to support teaching, learning, and research. Through platforms such as the UFS Rialto Marketplace, the team efficiently procures both physical and digital resources from global vendors.
- With systematic cataloguing, we are creating detailed metadata and using integrated library systems such as Alma to standardise, organise, and classify resources.
- Seamless discoverability ensures that every resource is accurately documented so that students and researchers can locate exactly what they need on the shelves or in the library's catalogue, KovsieCat (powered by Primo VE).



Career Services

At the UFS, Career Services is where ambition meets opportunity, helping students bridge the gap between university life and the world of work.

- We help students to craft a professional CV, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, and career plan.
- During mock interviews, students learn how to communicate and present themselves professionally.
- Our faculty-specific career weeks offer students an inside view of their chosen profession.
- Industry-focused career fairs usually conclude our career weeks and allow students to interact with potential employers who exhibit their companies and offerings.
- We encourage an entrepreneurial mindset, and several volunteering opportunities expose students to local community needs.
- Our popular Career Closet is a 'crowd-funded' initiative where students pick a professional outfit for an interview or for their first day at work. They get to keep the clothes they select.

Our CareerHub is a comprehensive online platform designed to simplify the job search process and enhance the overall hiring experience. With an extensive database of job opportunities across various industries and a user-friendly interface, our platform strives to match qualified candidates with their ideal roles and support employers in finding the perfect fit for their organisations.

Academy for Multilingualism

At the UFS, language is more than a means of communication. It is a tool for access, inclusion, diversity, success, transformation, and social cohesion. The Academy for Multilingualism (AFM) champions multilingual practices across all campuses, rooted in the university's commitment to social justice and equitable access to knowledge.

Four drivers from the UFS Language Policy (2023) are identified to implement multilingualism across the three campuses:



- **Developing Sesotho, isiZulu, and South African Sign Language (SASL) and promoting Afrikaans as academic languages:** This includes terminology development in various disciplines, translating PhD abstracts from the library repository into Sesotho, Afrikaans, and isiZulu, publishing academic books written in African languages, and conducting and publishing research on multilingualism initiatives.
- **Incorporating multilingualism into learning and teaching:** Initiatives include a translanguaging tutorial system for various modules, training tutors on translanguaging pedagogical practices, training academic staff in multilingual pedagogies, hosting seminars and conferences on multilingualism and translanguaging, and rolling out of short learning programme on Multilingual Pedagogies for lecturers.
- **Promoting multilingualism as a social asset through institutional events:** Key events such as the Kovsies Multilingual Mokete, Language Awareness Week, International Mother Tongue Day, and Multilingual dialogues for staff and students help in promoting multilingualism, social cohesion, and sense of belonging.
- **Improving English as a language of instruction:** This involves promoting academic literacy of undergraduates through ULD as well as multilingual postgraduates' academic writing with CGS.

International Partnerships and Relations

As a university deeply rooted in its region – yet connected to the world – the UFS shapes graduates and knowledge that contribute to responsible societal futures.

The university follows a comprehensive internationalisation approach that integrates programmes and activities to be globally relevant while remaining locally grounded. At the UFS, internationalisation develops intercultural competence, global citizenship, and epistemic openness among students and staff, expressed through partnerships, research collaboration, and participation in global knowledge networks.

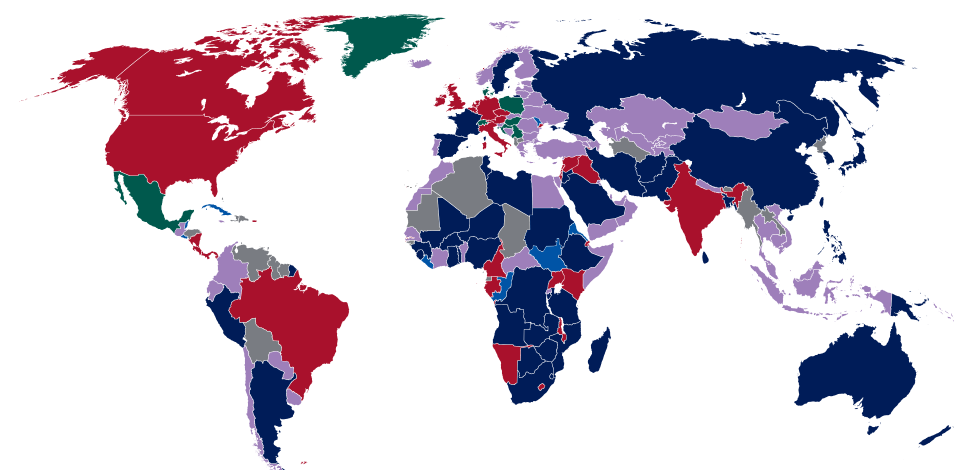
International collaboration with partners across Africa and the world enables engagement with diverse perspectives and fosters research collaboration and learning exchanges through both physical mobility and virtual engagement. Through these activities, students and staff contribute to addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals while gaining international recognition for their ideas and research.

Since 2022, UFS researchers have published more than 5 454 papers in internationally recognised journals,



collaborating with 4 269 institutions globally. Through these collaborations, the UFS contributes Africa-rooted intellectual perspectives to global knowledge communities while strengthening postgraduate pathways and research partnerships.

Students from many countries enrich campus diversity. The university supports the international student life cycle and prioritises curriculum internationalisation, advancing Africanisation and decolonisation while enabling global engagement. Participation in networks such as SASUF, ACU, INU, and IAU, together with initiatives such as the International Intercultural Diversity Festival and Africa Day Dialogues, promotes intercultural learning and global citizenship across the campus community.



Types of International Engagement

- International Students + Research Collaboration + Partnerships
- Research Collaboration + Partnerships
- International Students + Research Collaboration
- Research Collaboration
- International Students
- None

Research that matters

Research at the University of the Free State is driven by a clear purpose: to generate knowledge that shapes sustainable, equitable, and socially just futures. The university has advanced in the Times Higher Education Sustainability Impact Rankings 2026, achieving its strongest global performance in SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. Ranking in the 101–200 band globally places the UFS among top universities in the world, recognising the institution for measurable progress in widening access, promoting fairness, and opening pathways for participation across higher education systems. Guided by national and global frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union’s Agenda 2063, and South Africa’s National Development Plan, the UFS directs its research energy towards solutions that matter. Our research ecosystem nurtures excellence, transformation, and the next generation of scholars, supported by strong partnerships, cutting-edge facilities, and a commitment to relevance.

In 2026, the university is marking a significant milestone with the appointment of four research theme leaders. These leaders will guide flagship themes – Planetary Health and Well-being, Sustainable Futures, Systems for Societal Development, and Flourishing Life.

Our research focus areas include:

-  **Water and water quality** (SDGs 3 and 6)
-  **Health and well-being** (SDGs 3, 6 and 9)
-  **New scientific and industrial challenges** (SDGs 9, 13 and 15)
-  **Social justice and the removal of inequalities** (SDGs 4, 5, 10 and 16)
-  **Food security and land reform** (SDGs 2, 12, 13 and 15)
-  **Local and regional socio-economic development** (SDGs 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 15)

The University of the Free State hosts a diverse portfolio of research chairs that advance academic excellence, innovation, and societal impact across disciplines. The university is also recognised for impactful research that drives change and creates measurable progress.

Research chairs



7 SARCHI research chairs



1 SANRAL chair in Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology Education



1 ETDP-SETA chair in Mathematics Education



7 chairs under the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), the Department of Agriculture, and the University of the Free State (UFS) (ARC-DoA-UFS) research chair initiative

¹ South African Research Chairs Initiative.
² South African National Roads Agency Limited.
³ Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority.

Research impact



253 NRF-rated researchers (as on 31 May 2026)



717 master's graduates



171 postdoctoral fellows



494 research fellows



212 doctoral graduates



4 269 international collaborating institutions

Innovation and industry impact

The University of the Free State is steadily expanding its innovation and intellectual property footprint through a growing ecosystem that connects high-quality research with industry collaboration and societal impact. In 2025, the university generated R133,6 million in externally funded research income, including R13,4 million in industry-funded research across 32 active projects, demonstrating strong engagement with industry partners in sectors such as mining, biotechnology, agriculture, and health sciences. These collaborations support applied research, technology development, and knowledge transfer that contribute to regional and national innovation priorities.

The university’s intellectual property portfolio continues to mature, comprising 27 active patent families and 88 active patents (granted or pending) across multiple jurisdictions. During the reporting year, two new patent applications were filed, one patent was granted, and two new patent families were added, reflecting the continued translation of research outputs into protected technologies with commercial potential.

Commercialisation activities include technologies licensed to industry and a portfolio of five active spinout companies originating from UFS research. The innovation pipeline also remains active, with new invention disclosures entering the technology transfer system and additional technologies currently under evaluation for intellectual property protection and market potential.

Together, these indicators reflect a strengthening innovation environment at the University of the Free State, where research excellence, industry engagement, and intellectual property development combine to support economic development and position the institution as a gateway for impactful research collaboration.





Student life and success

At the UFS, we believe that student life is about shaping well-rounded individuals. That is why we place holistic growth and the overall student experience at the heart of everything we do. Guided by four strategic focus areas – Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development, and Student Experience – we create an environment where students are supported academically, personally, and socially. Through strengthened support structures, leadership development initiatives, expanded wellness programmes, and inclusive engagement platforms, we ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive. Our approach is proactive and responsive, designed to meet the evolving needs of a diverse and dynamic student body.

On- and off-campus accommodation

Accommodation is an important part of the student journey. We see our residences across all three campuses as communities that support academic success, personal growth, and social connection. Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) offers a variety of on-campus options for undergraduate and postgraduate accommodation. Junior residences offer living and learning environments that encourage diverse interaction and holistic development. HRA also allow off-campus students to be part of day residences that allow students to participate in residence life programmes. Each option is designed to be conducive to both living and learning, with study areas, computer rooms, bathrooms, and self-catering facilities that meet diverse student needs.

Beyond the campus borders, off-campus accommodation provides additional flexibility. Students can choose private housing or accredited facilities that extend the supportive environment into the wider community. These arrangements allow students to balance independence with access to university resources, while still being connected to the broader UFS student experience.

Postgraduate students have options that allow sharing and single rooms. There are different types of postgraduate accommodation with diverse amenities that enhance student success.



Arts and culture

The Arts and Culture Office within Student Affairs, Sport, Arts and Culture enriches the student experience at the University of the Free State by advancing social justice, social cohesion, and critical engagement with diversity through literary, musical, and performing arts. The portfolio oversees a wide range of flagship programmes and student development platforms, including the Kopsie Extravaganza, UFS Choirs, the Kopsie Marimba Band, DanceSport, Mx and Mxss UFS, and various cultural dialogue and community arts initiatives. These programmes provide opportunities for students across all campuses to develop artistic talent, leadership skills, and cultural awareness while actively contributing to a vibrant and inclusive campus culture.

Through performances, competitions, festivals, and creative platforms, the office nurtures student leadership, promotes student well-being, and supports academic success through meaningful artistic engagement. The portfolio also creates spaces for dialogue, identity exploration, and intercultural exchange, strengthening social cohesion and belonging within the university community. By cultivating excellence in artistic expression and student leadership, the Arts and Culture Office contributes to institutional transformation and positions the University of the Free State as a national and global beacon of cultural excellence, innovation, and thought leadership in higher education.



Sport

With more than 15 sporting codes to choose from, sporting excellence is part of shaping well-rounded graduates with a proud tradition of achievements and victories.

The university is proud of its sports facilities, including the following:

- Heated Olympic-sized swimming pool
- Two full-size astro hockey fields with a clubhouse, one of which is an Olympic-standard FIH hockey field, as well as a dedicated mini astro turf facility for junior development
- Tennis complex with eighteen nets, four with lights
- Five renovated squash courts
- Cricket oval with clubhouse and four outfields
- Three cross-country courses
- Main football field, clubhouse, and two additional fields
- Netball facilities with six courts and a clubhouse
- Shimla Park rugby stadium with clubhouse and four additional rugby fields
- Pellies Park with modern clubhouse and amenities
- One full-standard basketball court, one full-standard volleyball court, and two multi-purpose courts (for basketball and volleyball use)
- Two beach volleyball courts
- Four-lane synthetic run-up for long-jump and triple-jump competitions
- Floodlit football, netball, and basketball facilities on the Qwaqwa Campus
- Multipurpose sports grounds on the South Campus, including two football fields
- Sport Science Centre (rehabilitation centre)
- High-Performance Centre for athletes and sport teams
- KovsieFit Gym
- Indoor combat sports facilities, including one dedicated fencing studio and one shared dojo for karate and judo



Universal access

The UFS drives a campus culture where everyone feels welcome, ensuring that living, learning, and teaching spaces are accessible and inclusive.

The Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS):

- Promotes equity for students with disabilities to achieve academic success.
- Encourages inclusive attitudes and ensures a holistic, humanising experience in a caring environment.
- Implements accessibility features such as tactile paving, ramps at building entrances, clear signage, and dedicated seating in lecture rooms.
- Ensures that universal access is a standard consideration in all new building projects.
- Coordinates academic support and also coordinates South African Sign Language interpreting services for Deaf students and staff.
- Supplies study materials in accessible formats, such as Braille.
- Supports students with learning difficulties with concessions, i.e. extra time and human assistance.

Health and Wellness Centre – Counselling and Development

Supporting a culture of care is a core priority. A committed team of professionals is ready to support students in every aspect of their well-being. Across all three campuses, health and wellness centres provide access to compassionate social workers, skilled psychologists, registered counsellors, and professional nurses. We also host a private medical practice (Bloemfontein Campus) in the same building, offering services from doctors, physiotherapists, and optometrists.

Student Counselling and Development

Student Counselling and Development offers individual counselling sessions, career counselling, and a variety of workshops and programmes to equip students with skills to deal with life's challenges. A comprehensive website with mental health tools, resources, and helplines is available. The free South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) 24/7 careline is also available to students for any mental health challenges they may be experiencing.

Kovsie Health

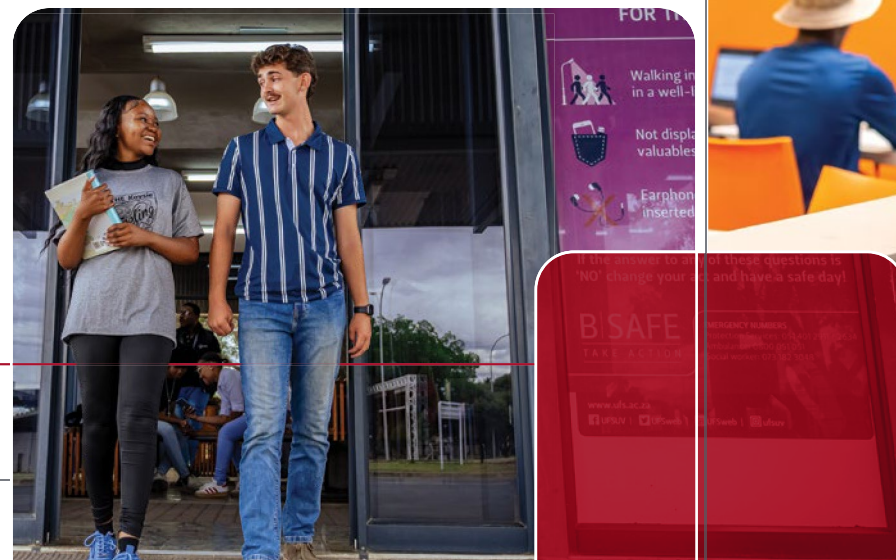
Kovsie Health plays an important role in promoting student wellness on all three campuses. From consultations and providing medication to routine health screenings, students receive professional care in a safe and supportive setting. Included in Kovsie Health's services is a dedicated support group – The Best Club – for students living with or affected by HIV, creating a compassionate space for care, connection, and community.

Student Wellness and Advocacy Office (SWAO)

The SWAO Office works to empower students through health education, prevention, and care. With its flagship First Things First campaign, students are encouraged to take charge of their health by accessing free, confidential screenings for HIV, TB, STIs, and non-communicable diseases. Additional support includes mental health awareness, safe sex education, and access to Pap smears and dental screenings.

Ensuring a safe campus environment for all

The mandate of the Department of Protection Services at the UFS is to create and maintain a safe campus environment in partnership with both internal and external stakeholders. Our dedicated team of Protection Services staff is working around the clock to ensure a safe and secure environment across our three campuses. The services offered by the department include, but are not limited to, conducting investigations of all reported crimes and missing persons, 24/7 emergency reporting, CCTV surveillance, security patrols, incident response, security advisory, security awareness capacity building, etc. The department is collaborating with other safety and security functionaries such as members of the police, private security companies, the Community Policing Forum, and neighbourhood associations, to name a few. These partnerships and collaborations are important, especially when dealing with crime affecting students while outside the UFS premises, since the department has no legal jurisdiction. All members of the UFS community are encouraged to actively participate in efforts and interventions to create and maintain a safe campus environment.



Bloemfontein Campus

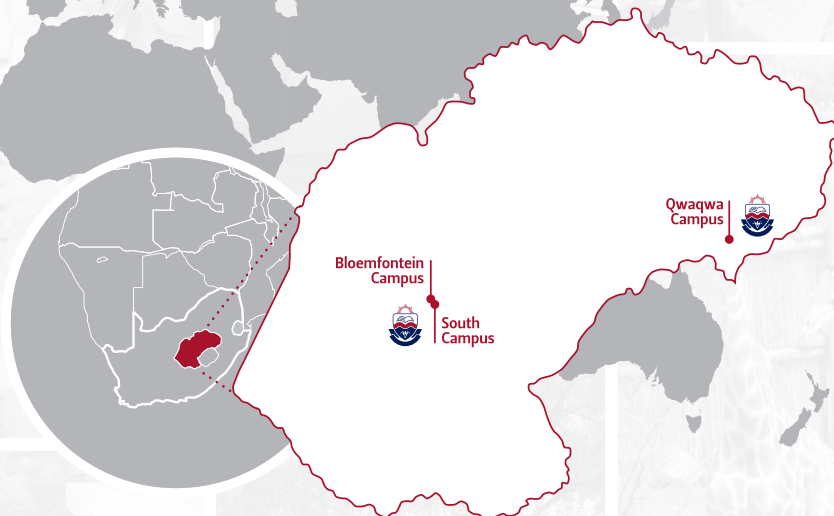
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