

2016



## University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA  
QWAQWA CAMPUS/KAMPUS







**The University of the  
Free State pursues...**

the promotion  
of innovation,  
distinctiveness and  
leadership in both  
academic and human  
pursuits.

“Young people must take it upon themselves to ensure that they receive the highest education possible so that they can represent us well in future as future leaders.” – Nelson Mandela







# Qwaqwa, the education hub in the mountains

The Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State lies in one of the most beautiful areas of South Africa – the foothills of the majestic Drakensberg Mountains. Tucked away at Phuthaditjhaba in a tiny corner of the beautiful Eastern Free State, the campus has humble beginnings of hardship and struggle, but also of progress and achievement.

Born out of a desperate need for a higher education institution, the campus became a place of choice over the years. Today, not only local students are enrolled here. Many postgraduate students from all over the world also join the ranks. The Qwaqwa Campus is probably the fastest growing rural campus in South Africa.

This is not only seen in student numbers and the academic offering, but also in the infrastructure. The mushrooming of new buildings in the past decade has changed the skyline where the campus nestles as the gateway to the Qwaqwa region. The beautiful grounds, planted with grass, trees and roses, the new walkways and common spaces, add to the atmosphere.

As a former branch of the University of the North, the fully incorporated campus plays an important role in bringing higher education to a rural and poor community. Today the campus is a proud player not only locally, but also in the national and international research arena.

In the academic offering, careful consideration was given to the reality of the campus's geographic position, the socio-economic background of potential students, the educational needs of the catchment area, and the natural resources of the region. The main consideration was that the learning programmes, research, academic interventions, and community-service learning opportunities would be socially and educationally responsive to the region.

In line with the vision of the UFS to develop niche areas for its campuses, socio-economic development, informed by a rural context, is the envisaged niche-area focus for the Qwaqwa Campus. Stimulating growth, job creation and entrepreneurship in the region has always been the main focus in the creation of demand-driven academic, skills and community development programmes offered here. Programmes are underpinned by a strong research agenda that focuses on identifying the best possible strategies for creating jobs in impoverished rural areas and understanding how best to stimulate economic growth in these contexts.

The campus offers programmes in the faculties of Humanities, Education, Economic and Management Sciences, as well as Natural and Agricultural Sciences, with postgraduate teaching in various centres of excellence.

Student growth is a good indication of the growing prominence of the campus. At June 2003, a total of 1 487 students were enrolled. By 2015, it had more than doubled to over 3 170.



*Prakash Naidoo,  
Campus Principal*



*Dr Elsa Crause,  
Campus Vice-Principal:  
Academic and Research*



*Teboho Manchu,  
Campus Vice-Principal:  
Support Services*







## Early years

With Qwaqwa's remote geographical location in the north-eastern corner of the Free State, there has always been an expressed need for a higher education institution in the region. This dream took many years to fulfil.

The first racially exclusive universities for black South Africans opened in 1959. With no higher education institution in Qwaqwa, people of the region had to enrol at the University of the North in Polokwane, 700 km away. The green light for the establishment of a university in the Qwaqwa region came in the 1970s, and the construction of the new campus began shortly thereafter. The University of the North offered various degree and diploma courses.

As early as 1998, there were talks of incorporating Uniqwa (as the campus was known) into the UFS, following a decision by the Council of the University of the North to delink the Qwaqwa branch. The Ministry of Education did not support the establishment of an autonomous institution at Qwaqwa and advised for the incorporation into the UFS instead.

The new democratic dispensation since 1994 brought huge challenges with regard to achieving greater equity, efficiency and quality among all higher education institutions across the South African education landscape. The government initiated a radical restructuring of higher education, aimed at providing the highest quality of higher education for all South Africans. It provided new impetus to discuss the incorporation of the Qwaqwa Campus with the UFS.

The board of the Higher Education Consortium in the Free State, consisting of all higher education institutions in the province, appointed a consultancy firm to facilitate the incorporation of both the Qwaqwa and the Vista (Bloemfontein) Campuses into the UFS. On 1 January 2003, Uniqwa became the Qwaqwa Campus of the UFS.

The campus was officially opened by the then Rector of the UFS, Prof Frederick Fourie. In his opening address, he said the incorporation represented the achievement of a long-cherished anti-apartheid goal of a unified, non-racial higher education system.



# Since incorporation with the UFS

The incorporation provided the opportunity for the Qwaqwa Campus to grow as a valuable academic and research asset.

In 2005 the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, challenged the UFS to ensure that the Qwaqwa Campus became a high-quality, non-racial campus and not remain “a black campus in the wilderness”. The UFS stepped up to the challenge, and today the campus is an integral part of the university.

Grants from the Department of Higher Education and money from the UFS's own budgets made major infrastructure projects on the campus possible. More residences were built to supply the high demand. Two of the residences were opened in 2015. A new computer lab, dining hall, a new Education building and new laboratories were added. Lecture rooms were upgraded and new academic buildings will follow. The entrance to the campus symbolises the pride the UFS takes in this campus.

Sports facilities received a huge boost thanks to a grant from the National Lottery for the building and improvement of sports infrastructure. Two new football pitches, one with lighting, and basketball, netball and volleyball pitches were erected.

A Sasol TRAC Laboratory was established in 2006 by the university's Research Institute for Education Planning (RIEP). Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners and educators from the Maluti-a-Phofung local municipality use the laboratory to conduct experiments from the physical science outcomes-based curriculum.

Other education programmes offered at the institution, include a BEd Honours degree in Comparative Education, Education Management and Curriculum Studies, an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Programmes such as BCom, BSc, and BA are also offered. More programmes are added on a regular basis.

A revitalisation programme was launched in 2011 with a view to strengthening the academic culture of the campus and advancing development in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality. The aim of the revitalisation programme was to give the campus a clear identity as an integral part of the UFS, making it attractive to students from various social, intellectual, and cultural backgrounds.



Physics and Geography Building



Wellness Centre







# Research

The national and international research community takes serious notice of the ground-breaking research at the Qwaqwa Campus. Researchers are bringing home awards and recognitions from various high-standing institutions. The growing number of NRF-rated researchers is also an indication of the quality of work done here.



## Afromontane Research Unit

Afromontane research moved to the foreground with the establishment of the flagship transdisciplinary Afromontane Research Unit in 2015. The unit will play a crucial role in the research of montane areas that can lead to sustainable development in the sensitive montane area of the Maloti and Drakensberg mountain ranges. The research will be extended to the rest of South Africa.



**Mountainous areas** face important developmental challenges concerning water supply, tourism, the management of sensitive mountain biodiversity, ecologically sustainable agricultural practices, and climate change. The recognition of the importance of montane environments is underdeveloped in Africa. With the Qwaqwa Campus located in the montane region of Qwaqwa, the UFS is ideally placed to promote interdisciplinary research on sustainable development.



## Chemistry

Research in Chemistry focuses mainly on the investigation of structure-property relationships in polymer blends, composites and nanocomposites. A large amount of work has been done on polymer/wax blends and polymer composites. Researchers have published more than 140 papers in international, peer-reviewed journals and a significant number of PhD and MSc students successfully graduated from the group. Preparative photochemistry of anti-AIDS drugs is an exciting new field of research offered in Chemistry.



## Computer Science and Informatics

The Department of Computer Science and Informatics is involved in developing mobile applications in various public and private sectors. Among others, research is conducted in mobile applications to deliver public transport information to Qwaqwa's montane developing communities, as well as assisting local hospitals with the Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems and feasibility studies to make them mobile. Departmental research is community oriented and aims to provide local communities with solutions using mobile technologies.



New student housing



# Research



## Geography

The Department of Geography puts a strong emphasis on montane research. Research is being conducted on environmental problems in the Maluti-a-Phofung area. This research encompasses in situ and ex situ conservation of paleontological resources with the aim to set up a GIS-based environmental management system and the role of local cultures in promoting regional tourism.

## Physics

The Department of Physics places emphasis on changing and improving community perceptions regarding electricity and electronics. The major part of the research has been in the field of solid-state physics and specifically on nanophosphors and other luminescent nanoparticles.

## Plant Sciences

The Department of Plant Sciences has created an inventory of the wild plants in the Qwaqwa region. The initial small collection of herbarium specimens at the Lere la Tshepe Campus has grown into a comprehensive herbarium with its own room in the Science Building. The department is involved in research on medicinal plants used in the management of diabetes mellitus, ulcers, microbial infections, and lymphatic filariasis. Plant Biotechnology (Proteomics) is the latest addition to the research capacity of the department and is looking at the improvement of food crop and quality to salvage Africa's food insecurity. With funding from the Water Research Commission, the department is creating a national database on wetland vegetation in South Africa. Postgraduate candidates (honours, master's, doctoral and postdoctoral) are involved in most of the research activities, which have resulted in the publication of several articles in national and international high impact-factor journals.

## Sociology

The Department of Sociology has been conducting and publishing research on human-scale development. The teaching conducted by the department, as well as the postgraduate work done by students and staff, incorporates youth inclusion, sustainable livelihoods and empowerment from an asset-based perspective.

## Zoology and Entomology

The Department of Zoology and Entomology is involved in projects related to parasitology, immunology and animal conservation. The research involves, among others, canids, bat-eared foxes, leopards, malarial parasites and immunology of laboratory rats. Several MSc students and a postdoctoral research fellow are involved in these projects and a number of publications have resulted from the research.











## Education

The Faculty of Education educates teachers in several disciplines. One of the faculty's roles is to prepare pre-service teachers for their work in schools, ensuring that they have a strong disciplinary base for their professional work. The faculty also teaches in-service teachers.

The work is informed by and closely related to the faculty's research and community outreach. Research focuses on issues of teaching and learning in specific disciplines, as well as research that focuses on general matters, such as educational contexts, social issues, and curriculum more generally.



## Humanities

The Faculty of the Humanities aspires to academic excellence in the quality of its curricula and teaching, its students' achievements and the professional accomplishments of its staff. Its mission is to generate, introduce/develop and disseminate knowledge, to stimulate critical intellectual investigation and to inspire innovation in students and academic staff by means of teaching, basic and applied research, and service delivery aimed at enriching and uplifting the community, the region, the country and the continent.

The faculty offers African Languages, English, Afrikaans, History, Political Studies and Governance, Psychology, and Sociology.



## Economic and Management Sciences

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences is a dynamic and innovative faculty which effectively meets the demands and challenges of the fast-changing economic and management environment. The inputs from the private sector, as well as the professional and general community, were taken into account in the design of its programmes.

The faculty offers two degrees: a) a BCom (General Management) intended to maximally develop a student's capabilities and potential in the fields of Accounting, Business Management, Economics, Industrial Psychology, and Public Management and Administration; and b) a BAdmin, specialising in the enhancement of skills in the public sector, parastatals, trade unions, NGOs, etc. The degree is structured around Public Administration and Management, with relevant ancillary modules in HRM, Supply Chain, Public Finance, Organisational Analysis, etc.



## Natural and Agricultural Sciences

The Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences offers more than 160 internationally accredited undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The faculty boasts with robust, competitive postgraduate training at Honours, Master's and PhD level in Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Plant Sciences, and Zoology and Entomology, with good national and international exposure of students to seminars, symposiums and conferences for further learning and networking.





# Infrastructure

The Qwaqwa Campus is not only one of the fastest growing campuses in terms of student numbers, but also with regard to infrastructure. Since its incorporation in 2003, the campus has had an almost complete makeover. Money for the projects is provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the UFS.

## Residences

One of the first major operations after the incorporation into the UFS was the renovation and refurbishment of the student and staff residences on campus. In 2006, additional student accommodation was acquired, with the use of the residences at Bonamelo and Tshiya Teachers Training College. Students who were placed in these residences were transported by bus to campus. Two new residences with 250 beds each were also added in 2015. A student life centre is also planned.

## Academic buildings

The Faculty of Education boasts a new Technology, Engineering Graphics and Design Education laboratory. New lecture halls have been built and others renovated. Also completed in 2015 is the new building for the Department of Physics and Geography.

Among the other developments is a dining hall for students and a roof over the amphitheatre in front of the Library. The covered amphitheatre has gained new meaning as a place for informal gatherings, discussions and promotions. A bed-and-breakfast provides accommodation for visiting staff and guests.

The new entrance gate and parking at the campus is also an indication of the high value the UFS places on the Qwaqwa Campus. The many paved walkways also improve access for people.







The boiler room that was converted into sports facilities



# Students and sport

## Student Life

As a small campus, students experience a greater sense of community and find it easier to establish and build meaningful friendships.

With academia being the obvious focus, the student experience is well rounded with cultural, musical, sporting and community engagement activities. Community-service programmes offer opportunities for volunteer work to uplift and enrich the surrounding community. Cultural activities cover a spectrum of disciplines. Vocally-gifted students can join religious, arts and culture groups, allowing them to perform in a number of specialist choirs.

## Sport

Sports and recreational facilities encourage active participation in student sport for recreational purposes, but also for competitive engagement on regional, provincial and national level.

A grant of the National Lottery assisted in the upgrading of the sports infrastructure. Various codes benefited from the grant, with the subsequent erection of two new football pitches, as well as hockey, basketball, netball and volleyball pitches. Active codes include men's and women's football, volleyball and netball.

The UFS Qwaqwa Campus offers quality facilities, coaching and opportunities to compete at the highest level. Their sportsmen and sportswomen feature prominently locally, provincially and nationally.

In addition to floodlit stadia, tennis courts, athletic tracks, netball and basketball courts, a new ablution and change room facility were completed in 2015, which also include an indoor games room for table tennis, soccer tables and the like.







## Community Engagement

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UFS and the Dihlabeng Local Municipality makes provision for the university to assist with the training of office bearers, support to the schools, and support with social engineering projects. The MoU also provides for Easter Enrichment Classes and Winter Enrichment Classes as part of a bigger package to provide support to schools in the Dihlabeng area. A Social Cohesion Project to promote reconciliation and nation building also forms part of the memorandum.

**Maluti-A-Phofung Annual Youth Dialogue: the UFS has partnered with the Maluti-A-Phofung Municipality to form an annual Youth Dialogue platform.**

In the Kagiso Trust Resilience Network, students mentor and train high school learners to become resilient in life. The partnership of 30 years with Kagiso was celebrated in 2015. In the period 2009-2014, the matric pass rate improved from 64% to 87%.

A Sasol TRAC Laboratory was established in 2006. Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners and educators from the Maluti-a-Phofung local municipality use the laboratory to conduct experiments. It introduces learners to the latest technology used by engineers and other scientists; stimulating learners' interest in the field of science, which will hopefully prompt more learners to pursue a career related to science.

Services to the community: the HIV/Aids unit and student-peer educators visit selected schools in Qwaqwa to equip Grade 11 and 12 learners with important life skills. The topics deal with the youth and HIV/Aids, transition from high school to university life, life choices and decision-making and the ABC approach. The unit collaborates with national and international organisations and stakeholders on HIV/Aids-related issues.





# The future

Vice-Chancellor and Rector of the UFS, Prof Jonathan Jansen, said in his inaugural speech on 20 October 2009, “I am deeply committed to closing the social, intellectual, resource and cultural distance between our Main Campus and the Qwaqwa and South Campuses. The Qwaqwa Campus especially, must not become a place marked by constant disgruntlement and ritual complaint, but an academically vibrant university campus that produces well-trained students who can address the poverty of that region of the Free State.”

The growth, developments and improvements of the past years are proof of the sincerity of the UFS's intentions towards the campus. The Qwaqwa Campus plays a pivotal role in the university's educational offering.

Qwaqwa is also a key feeder into the university's postgraduate pool. The academic offering is constantly under review – to supply in the local needs, but also those at national level. It fits in with the total academic offering of the UFS at its three campuses.

The campus offers bachelor's degrees in Social Sciences, Education, Commerce, and Arts. It is considering additional offerings, which will be driven by demand. This includes postgraduate offerings in selected subjects.

*The Qwaqwa Campus is growing into a campus of choice for many prospective and current students.*

A new degree, a bachelors in Community Development, will also be offered at the campus. This degree will be the first of its kind in South Africa, with a view of establishing it as a registered profession.

The social science degree may be repositioned for a social work qualification, which would have more direct value and provide work opportunities in the rural, poverty-stricken area. Introducing community development modules, which could later be implemented as full-blown qualifications, is also envisioned. In addition, unique qualifications, e.g. agricultural engineering, are being considered in order to attract students from outside the current student pool.

Furthermore, the UFS seeks to continue to engage with the Qwaqwa community through its community engagement policy, using its teaching, research and community service capacities to make a significant contribution to the development of the Free State.







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