

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 **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 *Excellence, Impact, Accountability, Care, Social Justice, and Sustainability*, 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 an innovative research-led, student-centered, and regionally engaged university that contributes meaningfully to responsible societal futures.

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



3 campuses

7 faculties



Economic and
Management
Sciences



Education



Health
Sciences



The
Humanities



Law



Natural and
Agricultural
Sciences



Theology
and Religion

Students
(2026 registrations)



38 438

Students
(2025 graduates)



9 478

Staff
(permanent and
temporary staff)



4 731

Registered
students



Contact
37 477
(97,5%)



Distance
961
(2,5%)

University rankings



9th in Africa in the
THE World University
Rankings 2026

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



Research impact



250 NRF-rated
researchers



494 research fellows



161 postdoctoral fellows



3 797 international
collaborating institutions



88 active patents



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 R94,3 million, significantly reducing the impact of load shedding and shrinking the institution's carbon footprint.

The UFS has turned **water-wise thinking** into a campus-wide reality. 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.



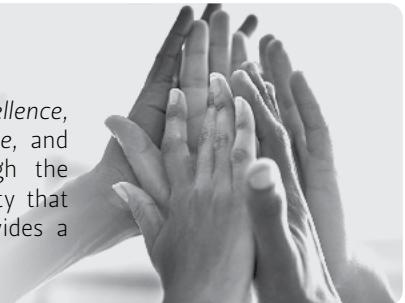
Our mission

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.

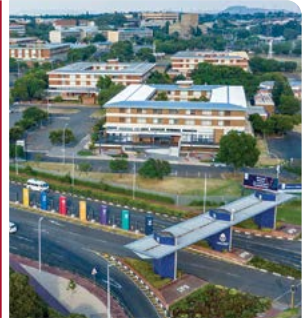


OUR CAMPUSES

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 –

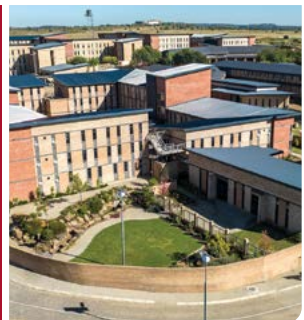
surrounded by mountains – the Qwaqwa Campus offers a more scenic setting. This multi-campus setup provides an integrated higher education experience, connecting people from different places and backgrounds.

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.



Embraced by the majestic Maluti Mountains, the **Qwaqwa Campus** serves as a sanctuary of higher education for the region's youth, offering tailored programmes that drive socioeconomic upliftment. Understanding the rural heartbeat of the Eastern Free State, our programmes are steeped in research that seeks innovative strategies for job creation and economic vitality. This is where academic rigour meets the quest for real-world solutions, all within an environment that inspires and empowers.

Perched amid the tranquil hills south of Bloemfontein, the **South Campus** is the nexus of the university's blended learning revolution, serving as a second home for the Centre for Teaching and Learning and leading the evolution of education by harmonising traditional teaching with cutting-edge techniques. It is also the cradle for South Africa's future educators, offering the BEd Foundation Phase programme.





OUR FACULTIES

The University of the Free State 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 co-edited 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, results-driven learning.

Short Learning Programmes include the following:

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



Faculty of Education

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 Certificate in Education
- 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 health care and scholarship by building a community of forward-thinking, adaptable health-care 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 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 health-care students. Using human patient simulators, task trainers, and simulated patients, students are provided with a safe space to practise, refine, and master key health-care 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.



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 & 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.



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.
- **DSTI/NRF SARChI Chair in Trophic Ecology:** Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen will continue to put the UFS on the map in terms of mountain research globally, and position South Africa as a major player in the mountain arena.
- **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 multi-disciplinary 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

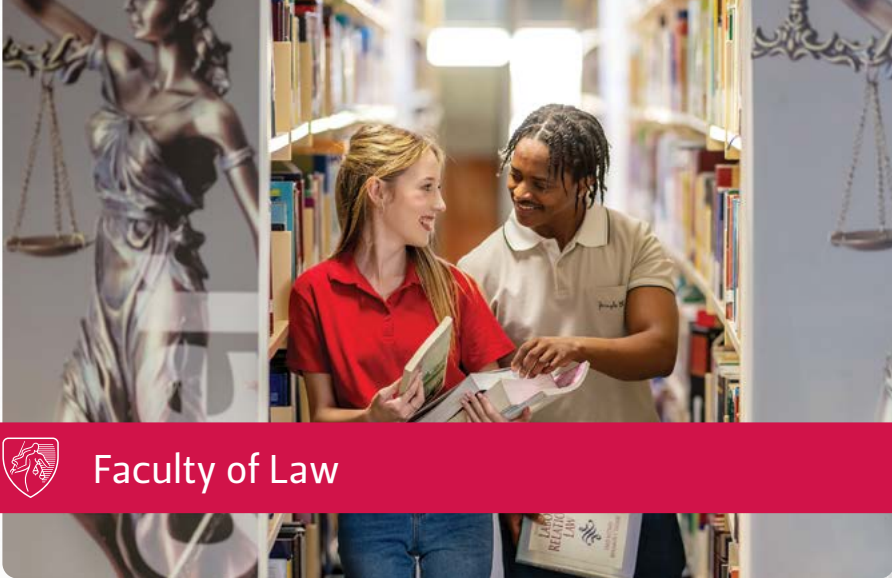
interface through domestic and international partnerships.

- **SciLytics 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





Faculty of Law

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 THE 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 complex 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, medical law, environmental law, 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 **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:

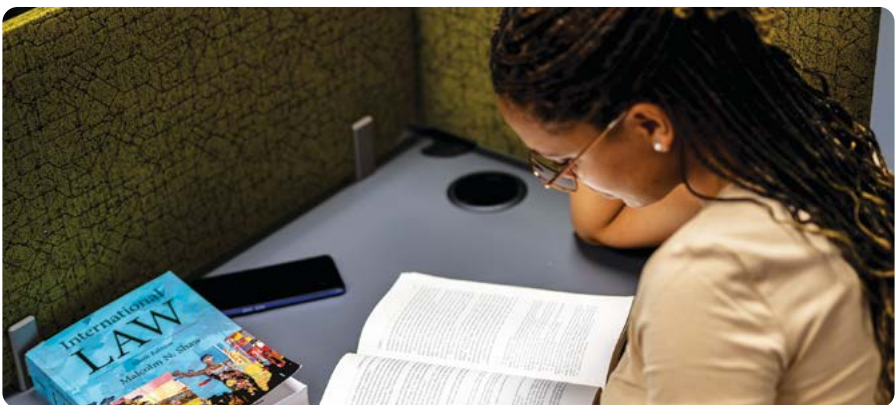
The faculty is anchored by three core academic departments: Mercantile Law, Private Law, and Public Law, and also comprises additional academic and professional units, including the following:

- **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 training for Law students.

Further initiatives, such as the Annual First-year Kovsie Moot Court Competition at the Supreme Court of Appeal, help to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world competencies.





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

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 responsible, sustainable futures. This includes initiatives such as the Digital Skills and Competency Framework for all students, as well as the Senior Student Experience.

Kovsie Phahamisa Academy

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 the design of flexible, high-quality learning pathways. These range from short learning programmes to executive education and are 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

Where research ambition meets dedicated support, the Centre for Graduate Support (CGS) helps turn postgraduate goals into academic milestones. From funding opportunities to research development, the 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 (RCD) and academic writing. The centre also assists with the funding

of postgraduate students. 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 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 acceptable time frames.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONS

As a university deeply rooted in its region, yet boldly connected to the world, the UFS shapes graduates and knowledge that thrive on the global stage.

The university follows a comprehensive internationalisation approach that positions internationalisation as a core institutional capability, strategically aligning and integrating programmes and activities to be globally relevant and engaged while being locally grounded. At the UFS, internationalisation focuses on developing intercultural competence, global citizenship, and epistemic openness among students and staff, while global engagement represents the outward expression of these capabilities through partnerships, research collaboration, and participation in global knowledge networks.

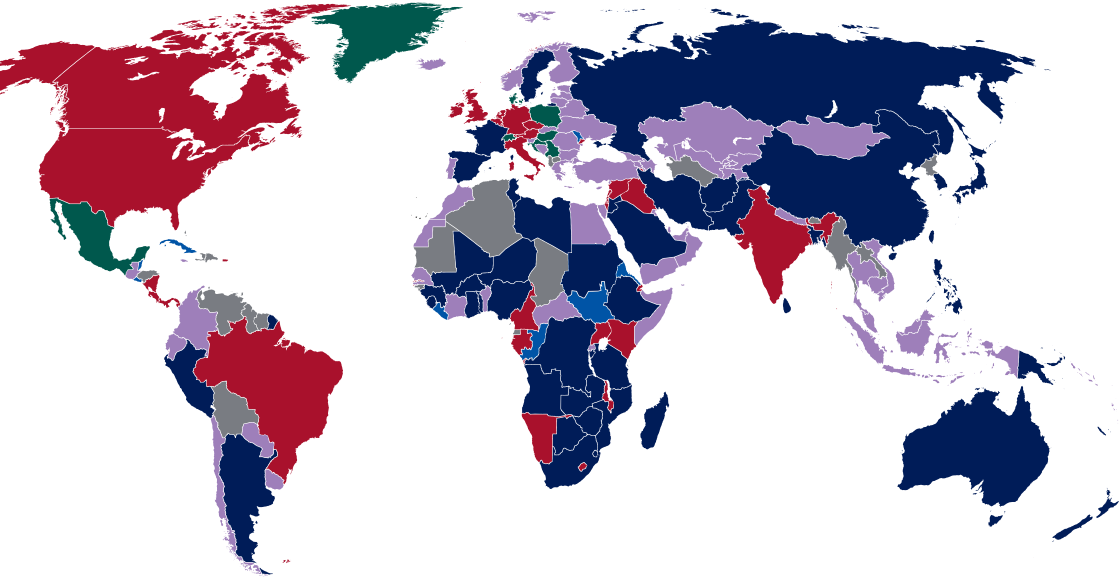
International collaboration with partners across Africa and the world enables the UFS community to engage critically with diverse views and perspectives, foster research collaboration and learning exchanges through both physical mobility and virtual engagement, and strengthen community engagement across divides. By embracing internationalisation, students and staff contribute to addressing the United Nations SDGs while gaining recognition for their ideas worldwide.

Since 2022 (–2026), UFS researchers have published more than 5 454 papers in internationally recognised journals, collaborating with 3 797 institutions globally, reflecting the university’s active participation in international scholarly ecosystems. Through these collaborations, the UFS contributes Africa-rooted intellectual perspectives to global knowledge communities while strengthening postgraduate pathways and research partnerships.

Our students from various countries enrich campus diversity. The university actively supports the international student life cycle, from admissions and immigration compliance to integration into the academic and social life of the institution. Curriculum internationalisation is a priority, advancing Africanisation and decolonisation while enabling students to engage with peers across the globe. Projects with strategic international partners integrate international virtual exchanges into our curricula. Our students and staff frequently receive prestigious international scholarships.

Students and staff regularly engage in various established international networks, such as the South Africa–Sweden University Forum (SASUF),

International Footprint



Types of International Engagement

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

the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the International Network of Universities (INU), and the International Association of Universities (IAU). Through such participation, the university strengthens collaborative knowledge ecosystems and enhances the international visibility of its teaching, research, and innovation.

The UFS' continuing celebration of cultural diversity in higher education through

initiatives such as the International Intercultural Diversity Festival and Africa Day Dialogues fosters inclusivity and stimulates critical debate. These initiatives form part of the university's Internationalisation at Home ecosystem, which promotes intercultural learning and global citizenship across the campus community. In this way, the university prepares graduates and scholars to engage ethically and confidently in a diverse and interconnected world.

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. Our academics address society's most urgent challenges through bold ideas, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovation that delivers real-world impact. 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. At the UFS, research is not an end point – it is a catalyst for meaningful societal change.

Our research focus areas include:

Water and water quality:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Health and well-being:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



New scientific and industrial challenges:

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



Social justice and the removal of inequalities:

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Food security and land reform:

2 ZERO HUNGER



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



Local and regional socio-economic development:

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



Research chairs:



7 SARCHI¹ chairs



1 SANRAL² chair in Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology Education



1 ETD³-SETA³ 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

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



479
master's graduates



135
doctoral graduates

**Research data is based on 2025 outputs.*



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.

With more than 15 sporting codes and world-class facilities, students are encouraged to pursue excellence, teamwork, and a healthy lifestyle as part of their university journey. Through vibrant arts and culture programmes that promote creativity, dialogue, and social cohesion, students also find spaces to express identity, build confidence, and contribute to a dynamic campus culture.



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)** assists in the following ways:

- 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.



Bloemfontein Campus

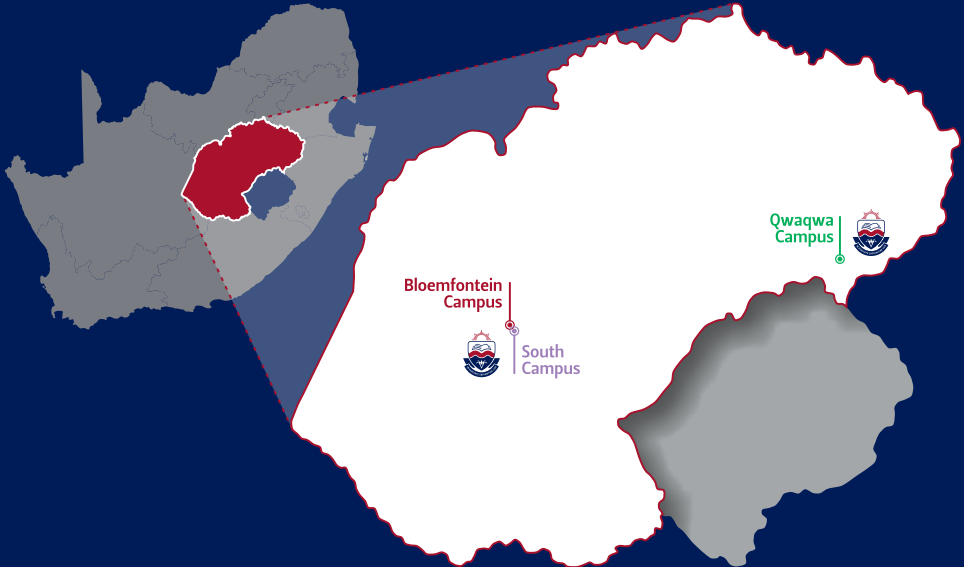
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