

MEDIA RELEASE

Thousands of high-quality, work-ready University of Pretoria students set to graduate

The significant investment being made in tertiary education in South Africa is paying off at the University of Pretoria, which will be awarding 11 908 qualifications during its Autumn Graduation season, which starts today, 19 April 2023.

Altogether, 46% of the students graduating between 19 April and 16 May received some form of financial assistance during their studies, underlining the vital role of financial aid in the delivery of high-level skills.

“Without financial assistance, these graduates might not have been where they are today, ready to contribute their knowledge and skills to the economy,” says Professor Tawana Kupe, UP Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

Among those who relied on financial aid to complete their qualifications and will be graduating over the next month are approximately 840 students in engineering, the built environment and information technology, and over 960 with economics and management sciences qualifications, including accounting sciences and tax.

Financial aid has also made it possible for approximately 560 students from the health sciences, 590 from the natural and agricultural sciences and 172 from the veterinary sciences to graduate. This along with 1 135 education students and close to 1 200 students in the law, the humanities and theology and religion faculties.

Add to these numbers the 6 502 graduates who did not make use of financial aid and it is clear that UP is making a sizeable contribution to the skills base of the South Africa and other African economies.

“We are one of the largest contact universities in the country, generating large numbers of graduates with relevant degrees – not only in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, but also in the humanities and social sciences, which emphasise critical thinking and the multifaceted aspects of humanity,” Prof Kupe says.

“Over and above their high-quality qualifications, we are intentionally producing graduates who are ready for work, whether in formal employment or entrepreneurship, and who can adapt to what is unfolding as the future world of work.”

Congratulating all the graduates ahead of the opening day of the Autumn Graduations, Prof Kupe urged them to keep growing, learning and being curious. “Future leaders like you, who are committed to changing the world, are needed.”

Large crop of PhDs and 10 honorary doctorates

Of the qualifications to be awarded at the 28 Autumn Graduation ceremonies, 201 are doctorates, 1 384 master's degrees and 2 021 are honours degrees. In addition, UP will be conferring honorary doctorates on 10 recipients for their exceptional contributions to society. Among them are several prominent African leaders in their fields who have received international recognition.

The first two honorary doctorates will be awarded on Friday, 21 April. The recipients are Ethiopia's Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation and Laurie Dippenaar, South African entrepreneur, innovator and philanthropist.

On 24 April, at a ceremony for theology and religion graduates, an honorary doctorate will be conferred on Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri, Malawian theologian and Deputy Secretary for the World Council of Churches since 2012.

The next recipient of an honorary doctorate, at a ceremony for humanities graduates on 3 May, is Verne Sheldon Harris, who is the Head of Leadership and Knowledge Development at the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

On 4 May, it is the turn of UP's Professor Kevin Wall, a civil engineer and town planner with a lifetime focus on improving service delivery in South Africa.

Two honorary doctorates will be conferred on 9 May. The recipients are Dr Tarek M Khalil, founding President, Provost and Dean of the Nile University's graduate School of Management of Technology, and Professor Louise Fresco, a world-renowned expert in the field of agriculture and food security.

As the Autumn Graduations draw to a close, legendary South African photographer Peter Magubane will be honoured with a UP doctorate on 11 May, with the last recipient, Professor David Nabarro, being honoured on 12 May. He is the Director and Chair of Global Health at Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation, and was also a Special Envoy on Covid-19 for the World Health Organization.

Another accolade that will be awarded during the Autumn Graduations is the Chancellor's Medal, the recipient of which is UP alumnus Professor Carel IJsselmuiden. He is the Executive Director of the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED) and, previously, was the founding Director of UP's School of Health Systems and Public Health.

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only University in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, ranked top in Africa. Overall has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 55 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Centre for World University Rankings. It is ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology, and law) and the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences).

In May 2020, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33 000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond University and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training.

For more information, go to www.up.ac.za