

NEWS RELEASE

Fresh faces, bright futures: Incoming first-years enjoy Welcome Day 2025 at UP



Almost 9 000 first-year students and their parents packed the Rembrandt Hall at UP's Hillcrest Campus for Welcome Day

Pretoria - The University of Pretoria (UP) recently hosted its annual Welcome Day event to induct first-year students who will soon be embarking on their university journey. Held on Saturday, 1 February 2025 at Rembrandt Hall on Hillcrest campus, this special event saw incoming students along with their parents and guardians visit the campus for a day that was filled with anticipation, celebration and a sense of community, setting the tone for what promises to be a memorable and impactful experience at UP.

During the event, attendees were introduced to UP's senior leadership team, with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Francis Petersen, delivering his first official Welcome Day address.

"I'm sure that each of you here today breathed two huge sighs of relief: the first when you received your results and the second when you received your acceptance into UP," he said. "You have all done more than enough to be here today. You have earned a position at one of South Africa's leading universities and one of the top universities in the world, ranked in the top 1% internationally in 14 fields."

Prof Petersen went on to acknowledge the immense promise he saw in the almost 9000 first-year students as well as their hard work and determination, which brought them to this moment. He encouraged them to make the most of the opportunities ahead.

Student Representative Council President Vhutshilo Muambadzi also addressed the first-years, offering words of support and encouragement.

“We are a community, and in this community, we live by the mantra ‘lift as you rise’,” she said. “It’s a belief that as we achieve success, we have a responsibility to help others climb alongside us.”

As the day unfolded, the energy and excitement of the first-year students were palpable. Many shared their feelings about beginning this new chapter at the University of Pretoria.

“Today was encouraging and inspiring, as I got to see the SRC as well as students who have walked the path I’m hoping to walk,” Keabetsoe Mpele said.

“I’m excited to see my daughter start her journey,” her mother, Manana, added. “After this programme, I trust she’s in good hands.”

Looking ahead, Academic Orientation Week is scheduled to take place from 3 to 7 February. This important week will provide first-year students with all the essential information and support they need to kick-start their academic journey. Lectures will officially begin on 10 February, marking the start of the academic year.

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>> [Download photos from the day here](#)

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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 its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers 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](#), which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of [Accounting](#) and [Finance](#); [Architecture](#); [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#); Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science.

UP's Faculty of Law has been ranked as the top law school in Africa for a remarkable eighth consecutive year. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities. For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za