

NEWS RELEASE

High-achieving school leavers choose the University of Pretoria



A group of students at the University of Pretoria

PRETORIA - In the 2023 admissions, across a spectrum of courses including medicine, engineering, veterinary science, law, and actuarial science, the University of Pretoria (UP) stands out as the institution of choice for many high-achieving students.

A remarkable number of admitted students secured exceptional scores of 95% and above, accompanied by outstanding performances of seven or more distinctions. Gauteng's first, second and third top matric students have all chosen to study at UP, all with 96%+ averages. In this highly competitive landscape, the University of Pretoria continues to attract and nurture the brightest minds, reinforcing its commitment to academic excellence and cultivating future leaders.

"UP positions itself on being a future-oriented university in all the programmes it offers," says UP's interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Themba Mosia. "We are ranked in the top 1% of universities worldwide in 10 fields and we are incredibly proud of our brand, reputation and educational quality. This is confirmed year on year by the escalating number of top matric achievers choosing to study at UP."

Gauteng's top matric student for 2023 is **Sheliza de Wet** who was head girl at Hoërskool Menlopark in Pretoria. She achieved 9 distinctions and will be studying medicine and surgery at UP this year. "South Africa needs doctors and if I can make a difference, it would be an honour for me to give back to my country," she says.

"I'm very excited, I was a bit overwhelmed as I didn't expect to be first but I am very thankful and very happy that I got into UP as it has a fantastic medical campus and I can't wait to experience student life."

Wian van Rooyen from Afrikaans Seuns Hoërskool in Pretoria achieved 8 distinctions, he was second in Gauteng and will also be studying medicine and surgery at UP. "It was an easy choice for me," he says. "The new era of medicine is an exciting field with rapidly evolving technologies that assist doctors and surgeons in their work and expand the reach of medical professionals to people everywhere."

Second in South Africa for mathematics, first in Gauteng for mathematics and third overall for all subjects in Gauteng is **Jéan Goodey** from Hoërskool Oos-Moot who achieved 7 distinctions and who will be studying actuarial and financial mathematics at UP.

"I focused on consistency every day so that I didn't fall behind and I always do the best that I can, says Goodey. "I chose actuarial and financial maths because I have a natural feeling for numbers. Maths is one of my favourite subjects and actuarial science fits well with it. I think I got the ability from my parents because they are both chartered accountants."

Another top matriculant with a gift for numbers is **Zonke Thwala** from Siphesihle secondary school in Waterloo, KwaZulu-Natal, who came third in South Africa in the Quintile 3 schools. She achieved 7 distinctions and is pursuing accounting sciences at UP.

She says a lack of electricity "made studying for matric very hard". "The transformer in my area blew and I had to use a candle and torch to study. I persevered and I am so proud of myself. It's really unbelievable and I am grateful to God, my family and teachers. Matric was the longest year of my life!"

One of the top private school matriculants, **Carine Pretorius**, from Helpmekaar College in Johannesburg who achieved 10 distinctions will be studying industrial engineering at UP. "I attended the engineering faculty's career week last week and industrial engineering appealed to me because it's all about processes, systems and productivity. During the week we also experienced the virtual mine – it's as if we were standing in a real mine. I hadn't seen anything like that, and the technological advancements that are happening now are amazing."

Welcome Day at UP is on 10 Feb and orientation starts on 12 February. "I'm a little bit nervous and excited," says **Takura Kufakunesu** from Pretoria Boys High who got 10 distinctions and will be pursuing computer engineering at UP.

He chose UP because he says "it offers one of the best engineering facilities and courses in the whole of Africa, and computer engineering offers a vast career path. Another reason that it is an obvious choice for me is because my whole family is there. My father is a mathematics professor, my mother is doing her PhD in electronics engineering and my sister has just graduated with a BSc in mathematical statistics."

UP's Virtual Reality Centre greatly appeals to Kufakunesu who says: "I'm fascinated with the world of technology, AI, augmented reality (AR) and robotics. I want to use technology to build things that make a difference to the world and improve people's lives." Regarding his 10 distinctions, he says: "My technique for success is 'bug your teachers as much as you can'. For Afrikaans, for example, I needed a lot of intervention to get it to an A."

Featured on the front page of the Beeld on 19 January 2024 is **Auerello Pillay** who will be studying for his LLB at UP. He matriculated with 8 distinctions from Redham House Waterfall Estate in Midrand. “UP has the top Faculty of Law in Africa and I already know students studying law there through debating and public speaking who can advise me.”

He says that from a young age he has been concerned with legal justice: “I feel the justice system with regards to gender-based violence and LGBTQIA2S+ is very flawed as it doesn’t offer people the protection that people are supposed to experience in terms of South African law. We need young minds going into those spaces to actually carry out justice.”

Elani van Rooyen from Randburg Hoërskool got 8 distinctions and will be studying veterinary science. “I experienced the UP campus as a Grade 11 when they invited us for the day there, and I really liked the atmosphere, the buzz and the students were really nice.” She has always wanted to be a vet: “Animals can’t speak for themselves and vets are detectives who need to find out what is wrong with them when they are sick and how to heal them,” says van Rooyen who has three beagles at home in Randburg.

Nina Kriel from Hoërskool Eldoraigne got 9 distinctions and will be studying actuarial science at UP. “I love maths, it’s my passion and it’s exciting to use maths and statistics to solve problems and to analyse and forecast risks and future scenarios.”

She is looking forward to making new friends on campus “and to make the best of student life. I want to use my years at UP to prepare myself for the rest of my life, to make the most of every opportunity and create memories that I will never forget.”

VC Prof Mosia extends his heartfelt congratulations to each of the students who will be joining UP. “Your unwavering commitment, hard work, and exceptional accomplishments have truly earned you your place,” he says. “A special note of appreciation goes to all family members and teachers whose support and encouragement played a vital role in the matric learners’ success.

“More than a quarter of a million alumni have passed through our doors, and many are now leaders in their fields, locally and internationally. UP turns 116 in February this year, and we welcome you to our diverse, dynamic community.”

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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 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. 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
