



University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus

Three campuses, one university – 2013-2014



UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA







EDUCATION

is the most powerful weapon which you can
use to change the world.

– Nelson Mandela

The University of the Free State pursues...

The promotion of innovation, distinctiveness and leadership in both academic
and human pursuits... (the UFS Mission Statement)



Qwaqwa, the education hub in the mountains

At the foot of the majestic Drakensberg Mountains, tucked away at Phuthaditjhaba in a tiny corner of the beautiful Eastern Free State, lies the Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State (UFS). The campus has a long but fascinating history, fraught with hardship and struggle, but also with beauty and progress.

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.

The UFS carefully considered the reality of where the campus is geographically situated, the socio-economic background of potential students, the educational needs of the broader catchment area, as well as the natural resources of the region when it established the academic offering on campus. 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 common vision of the UFS to develop niche areas for all its campuses, it envisaged a niche-area focus in Qwaqwa on socio-economic development, informed by a rural context. 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 on the campus. These 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.

The approximately 3 800 students on campus ensure a lively atmosphere and 230 people from diverse backgrounds are employed on campus. To date more than 5 500 degrees and 2 500 diplomas have been awarded.

Leadership



Prof Prakash Naidoo: Campus Principal



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



Mr Teboho Manchu: Campus Vice-Principal:
Support Services



From Uniqwa to UFS

In view of its remote geographical location, there has always been a need for a higher education institution in Qwaqwa. In 1959, the apartheid government established racially exclusive universities for black South Africans. With no higher education institution in the area, inhabitants of the region had to enrol at the University of the North, 700km away.

In the 1970s, the then Minister of Education and Training, Willem Cruywagen, approved the establishment of a university in the region. Construction of the new campus began shortly thereafter. The University of the North established a campus in the area offering 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 and advised for the incorporation into the UFS instead. Initial discussions were, however, not taken forward because of governance and administrative difficulties at the University of the North.

The new, democratic dispensation elected in 1994 faced huge challenges with regard to achieving greater equity, efficiency and quality among all higher education institutions across the education system. The government initiated a radical restructuring of higher education, aimed at providing the highest quality of higher education for all South Africans, which provided new impetus to discussions with the UFS regarding the incorporation of the Qwaqwa Campus.

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, who in his opening address said that the incorporation represented the achievement of a long cherished anti-apartheid goal of a unified, non-racial higher education system.



The past decade (2003 – 2013)

When former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, visited the UFS in 2005 she challenged the university to ensure that the Qwaqwa Campus became a high quality, non-racial campus and not remain “a black campus in the wilderness.”

The UFS certainly stepped up to the challenge, and today the campus is an integral part of the university.

In 2005, sport on campus received a huge boost thanks to a grant of R3 million 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. It consists of six work stations equipped with computers and electronic sensors. It introduces learners to the latest technology used by engineers and other scientists; stimulating learners’ interest in the field of science which hopefully will prompt more learners to pursue a career related to science.

In November 2007, the Qwaqwa Campus started offering a four-year B Ed degree in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in an effort to address the needs of teachers in the country. Other education programmes offered at the institution include a B Ed 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 B Com, B Sc and BA are also offered.

Much needed infrastructural improvements were also made on campus. A new Education Building, residences and a computer laboratory were erected, and the entrance to the campus and parking area were renovated. The dining hall of the old residences, lecture halls and laboratories were also upgraded.

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.

The UFS Council approved a number of infrastructural improvements on the campus at the end of 2012. These included the building of a new 250-bed residence, lecture halls and a laboratory for the Department of Geography and Tourism. Funding of additional infrastructure for the Department of Physics was also approved.



Research at Qwaqwa

Chemistry

Research in the Department of Chemistry focuses mainly on the investigation of structure-property relationships in polymer blends, composites and nanocomposites. A large amount of work was done on polymer/wax blends polymer composites. The group has so far published some 140 papers in international, peer-reviewed journals, and seven PhD and 23 MSc students successfully graduated from this group. Currently there are eight PhD and five MSc students in the group. A new field of research in Chemistry is the preparative photochemistry of anti-AIDS drugs.

Geography

The Department of Geography is developing a strong research emphasis on montane research. Research is being conducted on environmental problems in the Maluti-a-Phofung area, *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

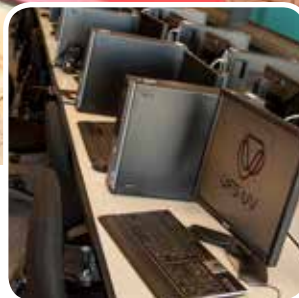
The Department of Physics has been involved in electronics research, with the emphasis on changing and improving community perceptions on electricity and electronics. The major part of the department's research has been in the field of solid state physics, and specifically on nano-phosphors and other luminescent nanoparticles. It has produced one PhD and six MSc students in this field, and currently it has seven PhD and four MSc students.

Plant Sciences

The Department of Plant Sciences has created an inventory of the wild plants in the Qwaqwa region. What started out as a 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 greater majority of the 3 000 specimens representing the flora of Qwaqwa were collected by Prof Robert Moffet and his colleagues, with substantial contributions made by local botanist, Mrs R Jacobsz and Mrs J Paton. The department is involved in research on medicinal plants and in creating a national database on wetland vegetations. Several publications have resulted from this research, and a number of MSc students are working on these projects.

Sociology

Within the priority of Development Studies, the Department of Sociology has published and does research on human scale development. Youth inclusion, sustainable livelihoods and empowerment from an asset-based perspective are part of both the teaching in the department and the postgraduate work done by students and staff.



Zoology and Entomology

The Department of Zoology and Entomology is involved in a number of projects related to parasitology and immunology, and to 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.

The Afro-Montane Research Institute at the Qwaqwa Campus

The Eastern Free State and Lesotho are dominated by the Maloti-Drakensberg highlands. Mountainous countries face important developmental questions 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 appears to be underdeveloped in Africa. Some South African universities are close to mountains, but do not have a specific focus on mountain research. With this campus located in the mountainous region of Qwaqwa, the UFS is ideally placed to promote interdisciplinary research on sustainable development in montane areas. South Africa lacks a dedicated mountain research institute, and the Qwaqwa Campus is well placed to fill this void. The campus is at an advanced stage of finalising research opportunities in this regard. This includes wide inclusivity, from renewable energy to eco-businesses in montane areas.

Students

Students are involved in various service-learning modules, where they get the opportunity for real-life experience, engagement with the community and the important principle of engaged citizenship.

Residences

One of the first major operations, following the merger with the UFS, was the renovation and refurbishment of the student and staff residences on campus. Renovations began in 2004 .

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. New residences were built in 2011 and today the campus is able to house 1 021 students in four female and five male residences.

Sport

In 2005, the Qwaqwa Campus received a grant of R3 million from the National Lottery to build and improve of 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. Today, active codes on campus include men's and women's football, volleyball and netball.

The future

The Qwaqwa Campus plays a pivotal role in the university's educational offering; therefore, the UFS has a clear vision for the strategic development of this campus.

A major revamp is underway; however, refocusing the curricula is equally, if not more, important. A strategy is being devised that will provide specific foci of excellence.

Qwaqwa is a key feeder into the university's postgraduate pool. To achieve its full academic potential, world-class expertise, research and postgraduate studies will enhance the culture and ethos required of a more developed campus.

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.

A new degree, B Community Development, will soon be offered at the campus. This degree will be one of the first of its kind in South Africa, with a view to establish 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, with a view to later implementing a full-blown qualification 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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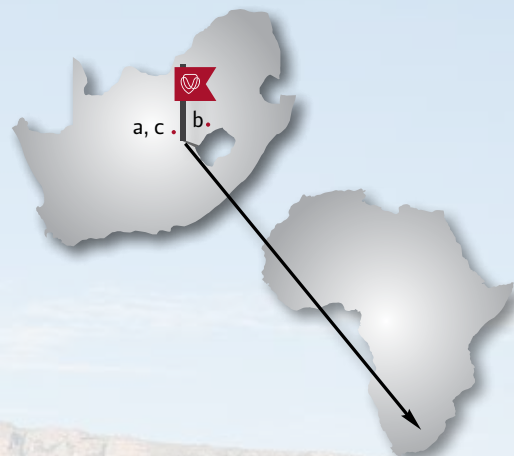
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