



University of the Free State South 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)



Gateway to education

Nestled in the hills overlooking the vibrant township of Mangaung, Bloemfontein, lies the University of the Free State's South Campus.

The campus was originally built in the 1980s as a satellite campus for Vista University. However, it was incorporated with the University of the Free State (UFS) in 2004 as part of the restructuring of the South African higher education system.

The facilities include an impressive administration building, a library, lecture rooms and an auditorium, which can accommodate up to 4 000 people.

Ever since its incorporation, the UFS intended the South Campus to play a meaningful role in the economy of the region and the upliftment of its people, as well as being the hub for distance learning programmes offered by the UFS.

One of the main roles of the campus is to draw new students from lower levels of education than previously possible, by widening and opening up access pathways at Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education (HE) levels. These young people need another year or two of study before they are ready to enter mainstream programmes. Even though these students have been let down by a dysfunctional school system, they go on to fulfil their potential and follow their dream careers as doctors, lawyers, or teachers, thanks to the extra year or two of study.

Another major function of the South Campus is to provide a base for the more than 6 000 students who are studying via distance education. These students are not able to study on campus due to geographical or economic reasons, or they might work full-time and have to complete their degrees on a part-time basis.

It is mainly owing to these distances-teaching students that the South Campus is experiencing the fastest growth at the UFS. On-campus students receive intensive small-group instruction, which has been proven to be a highly successful method of instruction. Distance education takes place online and through broadcasting mediums.

Leadership



Prof Daniella Coetzee,
Dean: School of Open Learning



Dr Peet Venter
Campus Head



Incorporation

The apartheid system in South Africa created a higher education sector that was racially divided, lacked a uniform standard of quality, and was plagued by inefficiency and replication. Different race groups were accommodated in different institutions.

With the dawn of a new, democratic dispensation, higher education institutions had to address huge challenges with regard to achieving greater equity, efficiency and quality among all these institutions across the system. The government initiated a radical restructuring of higher education, aimed at providing the highest quality of higher education for all South Africans.

The binary divide was dismantled and the number of institutions decreased from 36 to 23, through mergers and campus incorporations involving most institutions. Fortunately, no campuses were closed in the process.

The new higher education landscape now comprises three types of institutions, namely 11 traditional, research-focused universities of which the UFS is one, six universities of technology, and six comprehensive universities that combine academic and vocationally-orientated education.

The board of the Higher Education Consortium in the Free State, consisting of all the higher education institutions in the province, appointed a consultancy firm to facilitate the incorporation of both the Qwaqwa and the Vista Campuses into the UFS, as well as the Vista Campus in Welkom into the Central University of Technology (CUT).

School of Open Learning

The School of Open Learning was established on the South Campus in August 2011. It provides access to higher education for students who have not had the opportunity to study at a higher education institution because of geographical location, socio-economic circumstances, or other factors.

Open Learning was primarily established to address the growing need for access to the UFS and alternative modes of delivery of higher education.

Programmes are delivered through a blended-learning mode, which blends contact teaching with distance education. These include projects for in-service training of teachers in Mathematics, Natural and Physical Sciences, Languages, Literacy, Economic and Management Sciences, Technology, and various areas of Management and Leadership.

Apart from the training of currently serving teachers, the School and the Faculty of Education are also involved in the professional training of FET college lecturers. To this end, the School received a R17 million injection from the Flemish Government to develop programmes to further deliver in this area.

Most of the programmes offered initially centred on upgrading teaching qualifications, but since then there has been collaboration with other faculties and an increasing possibility of managing distance education programmes in the Humanities and Law. The programmes offered through distance education will ultimately involve all faculties.

Apart from offering online programmes, the School manages formal learning programmes through face-to-face contact at 51 off-campus sites in six provinces. By the end of 2011, more than 6 000 students were involved in formal Open Learning programmes, excluding students enrolled for the University Preparation Programme and the extended programmes on the South Campus.

Apart from formal learning programmes, the School is involved in developing and delivering ICT projects, especially for the school and teacher development sectors, as well as the delivery of short learning programmes in collaboration with various UFS faculties.

The main focus of the School is on teaching and learning, but research is considered a prerequisite for good distance education practice. A full-time research section was established with the appointment of a research professor, Prof Corene de Wet, and a lecturer, Dr Annelie Ferreira, in 2012.



Learning hub

AdvTech (Varsity College) in partnership with the Faculty of Law

The UFS and Varsity College launched a partnership in which the Faculty of Law offers a four-year LLB qualification through the School of Open Learning on seven Varsity College campuses countrywide. The School of Open Learning coordinates the project in cooperation with the Faculty of Law. The project was launched in 2013.

The slogan for this project is “Learning together”, which is appropriate when one considers the joining of these partners. The Faculty of Law is one of the oldest and most distinguished faculties of law in South Africa, as well as being the only faculty of law situated in Bloemfontein, the judicial capital of the country. Furthermore, the faculty has a close association with several overseas universities, which ensures that the institution is internationally recognised.

The other partner in the collaboration, Varsity College, was founded 20 years ago and today enjoys the reputation of being at the forefront of private tertiary education in South Africa. The institution offers tuition support for a variety of higher education degrees, diplomas and certificates.

The Faculty of Law is responsible for ensuring that students obtain a thorough grounding in legal theory, as well as a solid practical foundation. Varsity College, through a strong commitment to innovative teaching and learning, empowers more students to become legal graduates of the highest calibre.

This partnership is the first of its kind, paving the way for increased collaboration between public and private tertiary institutions, to serve the education sector and the future of graduates.

Advanced Certificate in Education and National Professional Diploma in Education

The Advanced Certificate in Education was developed to address the changing needs of the teaching profession. It focuses primarily on the upgrading of the knowledge and methodology of Science, Mathematics and Technology teachers in all the school phases.

The Advanced Certificate in Education: Leadership and Management is a programme offered to school management teams, including principals, deputy heads and departmental heads. The Department of Education, teachers' unions and the UFS select the participants who will take part in the programme. The Department of Education provides bursaries to all the students who are selected.

In addition to the academic component, the programme has a strong mentorship component. Every mentor is selected according to strict guidelines and must at least have been a principal. Every mentor is responsible for eight to ten students and supports the students with their practical work at the schools. Students are visited at their schools at least four times a year. The programme focuses on giving current and aspiring principals maximum exposure to the theoretical aspects of school management, as well as the practical implementation of theory at the school.

Family Maths and Science

The Family Maths and Science programme of the School of Open Learning aims to demystify mathematics and science in the early school years. It makes Science and Mathematics accessible to young children and their parents, with the aim of developing a positive attitude towards these often difficult school subjects.

The main aim of the programme is to empower educators, parents and student educators by giving support and training in hands-on teaching methodologies.

A R1 million sponsorship from Old Mutual in 2013, which extends over a three-year period, bears testimony to its success.

Learners, educators and parents from 18 schools in Thaba Nchu and Botshabelo are benefitting from this project. Teachers receive training at the South Campus and then return to their community to train parents and to teach learners. Teachers also receive activity material to use in their classrooms. The 18 participating schools were selected by identifying feeder schools of secondary schools in the UFS School Change Project.



Young Adult Learning Programme (Y-ALP)

The Y-ALP was established in January 2011. The ALP started out by giving Grade 12 learners, who did not meet the admission score requirements of the University Preparation Programme (UPP), i.e. an admission point of 20 to 24 points, an opportunity to enrol for five developmental subjects, namely English Academic Literacy, Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation, Anthropology, and Information and Communication Sciences.

Candidates who pass all these subjects throughout the one year of study are then allowed to apply to the UPP, thereby eventually gaining access to UFS degree studies, if successful. Therefore, for Grade 12 learners who have an admission score of 19 and less (with 16 being the lowest permissible score), the current Y-ALP offers the only opportunity for entry into higher education.

Owing to the premises of Adult Learning, the Centre for Teaching and Learning is developing more diverse exit opportunities for successful ALP students by negotiating to add subjects from other post-school institutions, such as post-Grade 12 colleges and universities of technology, and by adapting the curriculum in such a way that successful ALP students could potentially enter the world of work without further studies.

University Preparation Programme (UPP)

The UPP is a one-year bridging programme for students from historically disadvantaged communities who do not meet the initial admission requirements for mainstream studies at a university.

The programme offers a ten-subject strategic programme in Human and Social Sciences, Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and Economic and Management Sciences. Students also follow compulsory basic skills and competencies and academic literacy courses.

After successful completion of the bridging year, students continue their studies at the Bloemfontein Campus.

Since 1993, more than 4 500 students have successfully completed the programme and gone on to degree studies at universities. Since 1996, 2 051 students obtained degrees at the UFS via the UPP.

As an incentive to study harder, the UPP top achievers in the Faculties of Humanities, Economic and Management Sciences, Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and Education receive a bursary at the end of the year.

Extended Degree Programme (EMS)

The Extended Degree Programme was developed for students who do meet mainstream university admission requirements, but have a low admission score.

The educational rationale for providing an extended four-year degree programme is based on bridging the gap between inadequate preparation at school and expected higher education academic achievement. This is done by making the first year of study in undergraduate programmes more accessible and manageable by extending it over two years and by adding applicable development modules in the first year of study. The skills and competencies acquired in the academic development modules are then applied in subsequent years of study in the core disciplinary modules.

In addition, the subject content of subsidy-bearing core first-year modules is made more comprehensible by redesigning it according to open learning methodology that encourages active student participation in the learning process, thus contributing to the development of critical thinking ability and greater academic success.

Two of the university's extended degree programmes, i.e. Natural and Agricultural Sciences (first year of study) and Economic and Management Sciences (first and second years of study), are presented at the South Campus. To encourage students in their studies, the top achievers in the B Com and B Sc extended programmes receive bursaries at the end of the year.



School Technology Innovation Centre (STIC), also known as ICTISE

The mission of ICTISE is to advance education through the innovative use of information and communication technology in teaching, learning and leadership in schools. Thanks to the Internet Broadcast Project, ICTISE in partnership with the Free State Department of Education provides real-time, interactive lessons to more than 60 schools across the province. These lessons are broadcast daily to both teachers and learners in core subjects, namely Mathematics, Physical Science, Accounting, Life Science, Geography, and Economics.

Each participating school has been equipped with the necessary technology, as well as software, domain registration and email accounts for each teacher/learner at all the centres. Six teachers and two learners from each of the centres received face-to-face training at the South Campus.

This project allows users to engage and interact with each other through Instant Messaging (IM) and videoconferencing, while having access to some of the best subject teachers in the Free State. Broadcasts are recorded, which allows teachers and learners to reuse lessons as required. Lessons are available through a cataloguing system.

In future, a call centre will be set up to support teachers and will be available from 14:00 to 19:00 daily. Calls will be recorded and analysed to influence the development of subject-focused teacher workshops in the province.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Open Learning

RPL recognises the skills and knowledge a prospective student has as a result of learning through work experience, life experience, informal study, short courses, and formal study. RPL is a way of assessing knowledge, skills and competencies against the outcomes of study programmes, qualifications or modules.

The RPL office provides services relating to the recognition of prior learning to all faculties. This office supports RPL applicants in the RPL process, and guides academic and support staff to provide quality RPL.

If, through the process of RPL, a student is found to be competent, he/she may qualify for admission into a qualification, or may be awarded credits for subjects or a module within a qualification.

The RPL Centre of the Free State Higher Education Consortium (FSHEC) is located at the South Campus.

UFS School Change Project

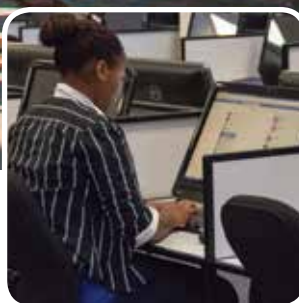
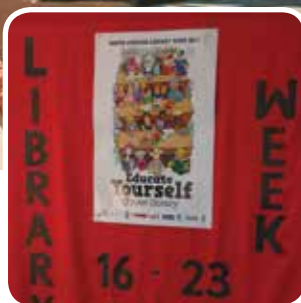
The education system in South Africa is in crisis despite innovative plans proposed by Government and funds being increasingly allocated to special programmes and projects.

As part of its community engagement projects, the UFS launched the Schools Change Project under the auspices of the Vice-Chancellor and Rector, Prof Jonathan Jansen.

The goals of this project is to improve the academic achievement of senior secondary school learners, especially in the fields of Mathematics, Physical Science and Accounting; to develop schools to have strong management and leadership; to create optimal opportunities for learners from targeted schools to access university; and to develop a model that can be used to facilitate school improvement in South Africa.

As part of this project, experts are deployed as mentors in School Management, Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and Accounting to work alongside teachers. These experts monitor, support, evaluate, develop and motivate the subject teachers to enhance their pedagogical and subject knowledge. The core responsibility of the mentors is to attend classes and support the teaching and learning activities in class, thereby ensuring that Grade 10, 11 and 12 teachers develop the necessary subject knowledge and teaching skills.

In addition, experienced principals are deployed as mentors to work alongside the resident principal and his school management team to enhance their capacity to offer on-site leadership and management that boosts classroom instruction and student learning.



Another important aspect of the project is establishing instructional, managerial, financial and administrative routines in every school to ensure that teachers teach every day in every class on his/her schedule and that school leaders manage resources for optimal learning effects.

The university also has a Project Operations Centre on the South Campus which is responsible for mentor and project staff recruitment, shaping the programme and monitoring progress. This office, in cooperation with the UFS Department of Finance, manages the budgets and provides regular reports.

Research Unit

Prof Corene de Wet was appointed in June 2012 as a researcher at the School of Open Learning. Her field of expertise is bullying in schools, but she has recently begun researching Open and Distance Learning

Current research projects being undertaken at the Research Unit focus on workplace bullying in the teaching profession, as well as an evaluative study of open and distance learning at the School of Open Learning.

Achievements

In 2007, students from the South Campus were the first to complete a new four-year B Sc programme within the minimum prescribed time. The new programme enables academically underdeveloped students to access the sciences and have their potential developed in a foundation year added to the customary three-year B Sc programme.

In 2012, Buyisani Masabalala, a student who is part of the UPP, was named top student in the Natural Sciences for students in the programme. He and 26 other students on the UPP and Extended Degree programme were the top performers during their first six months in all subjects on the UPP and Extended Degree programme.

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