



Watershed moment as UNIZULU secures accreditation to offer engineering qualifications

GCINA NHLEKO

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) has been accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to offer two four-year engineering degrees from 2021.

These qualifications are the Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering and the Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering.

The institution received a letter of endorsement from the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) and will be accredited by the council as part of the Washington Accord international accreditation process.

With these new offerings, the university is responding to the vast needs of a technological world that requires well skilled and trained engineers to bring ideas to reality. Engineering is based on the application of mathematical and scientific principles, with engineers developing solutions to the world's biggest technical issues.

Being the only comprehensive tertiary institution situated in the northern KwaZulu-Natal region and within the



UNIZULU is delighted at the prospect of enrolling the first group of engineering students into its newly accredited Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering and Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering programmes.

industrial hub of Richards Bay in the City of Umhlatuze, UNIZULU is well primed to offer solutions for a world that is fully evolving towards the Fourth

Industrial Revolution. The institution understands that engineers are often the drivers of major developments, and that most services and products involve some

element of engineering. In this way, engineers pave the way to long, fulfilling and healthy lives.

As part of efforts to strategically position the Richards Bay Campus and its Engineering programmes, an ECSA symposium and engagements with the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ) was held. Both these engagements have paved the way for richer collaboration between UNIZULU, RBIDZ and ECSA. The provincial Department of Economic Development has expressed willingness to allocate space for the development of engineering facilities next to the RBIDZ Techno Park. The aim is to make UNIZULU Engineering programmes an integral part of its growth plans as it will be providing competitive knowledge to industry, education, and society.

The appointment of seasoned scientist and quality assurance expert Dr Makhapa Makhafole as the Executive Director: Richards Bay Campus has been heralded as a positive turning point in fast-tracking the university to be a leader and quality service provider of education, as clearly defined in the university's strategy for 2016 to 2021.

Highlighting potential occupational health hazards in academic and health settings

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE Department of Nursing Science at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted a webinar on potential occupational health hazards and related issues in academic and health settings.

The virtual lecture formed part of the university's 60th anniversary celebration, and the guest speaker was Makhosazana Kunene, a nurse, entrepreneur and leader whose contribution and experience extends beyond South Africa's borders. The founder and managing director of Mpilehle Consulting PTY (Ltd), a 100% black-owned and managed company, she specialises in health governance as well as occupational health and safety.

In her welcome address, Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation Professor Khoboso Lehloenyane said: "This is the eighth virtual lecture by the Faculty of Science and Agriculture in honour of UNIZULU's 60th anniversary celebration.

"The lecture has come at a time when it is most needed; when the majority of us are particularly concerned about health issues during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are looking forward to learning more about occupational health hazards in academic settings."

Demonstrating the seriousness of occupational health, Kunene shared statistics that highlighted the evolution of occupational health sector. "There has been a rise in the number of employees reporting stress related illnesses and mental health. Global research shows that about two million individuals die annually due to occupational health related diseases and conditions," Kunene said.

She elaborated on the importance of the occupational health sector, explaining that it is a major component of productivity in business. According to her, businesses lose billions of rands due to days lost while employees are away on sick leave – and this ultimately has an impact on the economic growth of



Guest speaker, Makhosazana Kunene unpacks occupational health and safety-related issues within academic settings.

the country.

Kunene also touched on the regulatory framework governing the sector. In her opinion, the Occupational Health and Safety Act introduced in the early 1970s had not been effective, due largely to inadequate capacity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Act.

Prof Jane Kerr, Head of the Department of Nursing Science, said her department would be setting up an occupational health curriculum, adding that some collaboration with Kunene would be of value.

Prof Kerr worked as an occupational health nurse in the late 1980s and early 1990s. "At that time, companies had occupational health practitioners "day in and day out" to deal with health education, injuries on duty and audits for safety, among other issues," she said.

SIYANDA MNTAMBO

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Russian-based agricultural company Schelkovo Agrohimi and nuclear energy company Rosatom. The aim of the MOU is to develop a cohort of graduates with specialised skillsets that are relevant to the science, technology and agricultural sectors.

Appending the signatures on behalf of the two companies were Alexei Semenov from the Russian Embassy and Ryan Collyer, Acting COO of Rosatom Central and Southern Africa. Representing UNIZULU was Vice-Chancellor Prof Xoliswa Mtsose, alongside her executives.

In her opening remarks, Prof Mtsose said the university was excited to establish this partnership with two of Russia's most reputable companies. "The forging of these strategic partnerships (is) consistent with the university's mission and vision of producing globally competitive graduates relevant to the human capital needs of the country, by providing quality education that upholds high standards of research and academic excellence. These partnerships speak directly to three of the university's six strategic priorities: enhancing research and innovation, enhancing the quality and profile of UNIZULU graduates, and developing ways to manage the national, regional, and international reputation of the University of Zululand.

"Viewed from this strategic point, these partnerships are not merely a nice pair of engagements – they are at the core of our business of contributing to the human capital development of South Africa. Schelkovo Agrohimi is one of the largest manufacturers of pesticides in Russia. The products are represented in all regions of Russia and in CIS countries of major interest to the University of Zululand," explained Prof Mtsose.

The areas of co-operation will include opportunities desirable and feasible for the development and strengthening of co-operative relationships between the two parties. These opportunities may include:

- ◆ Joint educational programmes between UNIZULU and Rosatom-associated educational institutions

UNIZULU students to benefit from MOU with Rosatom and Schelkovo Agrohimi



Prof Xoliswa Mtsose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, and Ryan Collyer, Acting COO of Rosatom Central and Southern Africa, represent two of three parties who recently entered into a memorandum of understanding aimed at, among other things, developing UNIZULU students.

- ◆ Exchange of undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral students to Rosatom-associated educational institutions in Russia;
- ◆ Joint research projects between UNIZULU and Rosatom-associated educational institutions in Russia;
- ◆ Joint educational events and seminars in South Africa and abroad;
- ◆ Joint cultural programmes in South Africa and abroad;
- ◆ Exchange of informational materials, publications, and other documentation;
- ◆ Bursary programmes for South

- ◆ African students to study in Russia;
 - ◆ Student outreach and student competitions.
- "This memorandum aims to encourage various joint activities, and we look forward to a fruitful co-operation in terms of achieving the joint goals set out," Collyer said. "With more than 70 years experience in the industry, I truly believe nuclear technology has a critical role to play in the enhancement of modern society. Not just through the production of clean sustainable energy, but also through the further advancement of nuclear medicine and through research and development. As a respon-

sible vendor at Rosatom, we understand the necessity for a comprehensive human resource development programme in its partnering countries. We therefore view education as a vital aspect of our continued co-operation with African nations, and we play a very active role in the development of educational programmes in Africa.

"We have more than 200 African students studying at Russian institutions on various nuclear disciplines. In total, we have 1 900 students from 45 various countries currently studying various disciplines in nuclear education programmes in Russia," Collyer concluded.

UNIZULU prepares to upskill novice researchers during MBALI Conference

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law (FCAL) within the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) is gearing up for its Management, Business, Administration and Legal Initiatives (MBALI) Faculty Conference, which is scheduled to take place on December 3 and 4.

The two-day event will take place in a hybrid fashion, with a limited number of participants in physical attendance, while the remainder will connect virtually. One of the organisers of the conference, Prof Irshad Kaseeram, who is also Deputy Dean: Research and Internationalisation in FCAL explained that since the country is on Alert Level 1 of the national shutdown, limited face-to-face interaction is allowed. Bearing this in mind, the faculty therefore decided to cater for up to 50 face-to-face and online

interactions in two breakaway venues at the Richards Bay Campus, while strictly adhering to the basic Covid-19 regulations of enforcing social distancing and proper sanitisation.

"This year, the conference will target faculty postgraduates and staff researchers. The main focus (will be) the promotion of research among novice researchers, through interactions with experienced staff and external researchers within the community of practice. Participants will get both the feel of a normal conference setting as well as the 'new normal' online experience," Prof Kaseeram said.

He acknowledged that the pandemic had prevented the faculty from hosting the biennial international version of the MBALI conference this year. The conference, for which ABSA Group Limited has already granted funding, will now be held in 2021 when Covid-19 is no longer a threat.



Members of the organising team with some of the guest speakers during the 2018 biennial MBALI International Conference, which took place at Empangeni's Umfolozi Hotel Casino and Convention Resort.

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