

Closure and the relocation of the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) Upington Campus

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The Upington Campus of the VUT was established in 1995 to provide quality tertiary education that is affordable and accessible to the rural communities of the Northern Cape province. As a sole provider of higher education within a 400km radius in a sparsely populated province, the campus had a huge impact on the higher educational needs of communities of Upington and neighbouring towns such as Keimoes, Kakamas, Kenhardt, Olifantshoek, Groblershoop, Prieska as well as other regions such as Namakwaland, Pixley ka Seme (De Aar-Prieska area), JTG (Kuruman area) and even as far as Namibia.

Situated within a predominantly agricultural area, with communities making agriculture their daily lives, one of its niche areas was in agricultural fields, hence the National Diploma in Agricultural Management played such a prominent role in the programme qualification mix that was offered by the campus, namely: National Diplomas in Agricultural Management, Tourism Management, Internal Auditing, Marketing Management, Retail Business Management, Human Resources Management and Cost and Management Accounting.

Although the Upington Campus had a small number of registered students, it created an opportunity for staff and students to get to know one another easily and developed a special bond that gave them hope for the growth and development of the campus. Each student had an opportunity to participate, cooperate and enjoy being part of the VUT family through the support of both academic, administrative and support staff, in achieving the qualifications that they were enrolled for.

The impact of the Covid-19 in the country's economy and the change in the higher education landscape, have affected the VUT's efforts to continue to operate the Upington site of delivery effectively. It was, therefore, recommended that the Upington campus be closed, and that staff, students and the university assets be transferred to the Vanderbijlpark Campus. The recommendation was accepted by the management committee (mancom) and subsequently approved by Prof. Ihron Rensburg, VUT administrator. The process of closing the campus is scheduled to be completed by 31 December 2022.

On the positive side, the university has successfully negotiated the transfer of the Centre for Entrepreneurship to the Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley. The centre will continue to operate from the existing premises in Upington and will be funded by the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

The request to transfer the Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) station was rejected by the Sol Plaatje University because it is not in line with the University's mission. The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) will continue to give financial support to the TTI station and will decide on its future.

Another feather in the cap is that the Northern Cape/Southern Gauteng E-skills CoLab hosted by the VUT will continue to operationalise the NDP 2030 strategy in the Northern Cape aimed at empowering and developing communities as part of the NEMISA and other stakeholder networks, to make meaningful impact in the lives of the communities through digital training and ensuring that they are ready to participate in the digital and knowledge economy of South Africa and be a meaningful part of the fourth industrial revolution.

The Vaal University of Technology wishes to thank all the stakeholders for supporting the campus over the period of 27 years of its existence and believe that the transfer is in the best interest of the University, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of its academic excellence.

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Vaal University of Technology

Established in 2004, as the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), VUT originated as a College of Advanced Technical Education (1966-1979) and was later known as Vaal Triangle Technikon (1979-2003).

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