

Articulation Hub Ignites Academic Innovation in Limpopo



Delegates of the launch of the UNIVEN – Limpopo articulation hub

On 23 October 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture, launched the Unfurling Post-School Education and Training (UPSET) Hub Programme, which took place at the Kalahari Waterfront in Habudeli, Nandoni. The event marked a significant milestone in advancing educational innovation and

collaboration across institutions. Attendees engaged in discussions that aimed at strengthening support for inclusive learning hubs and promoting sustainable development through education and training. The programme provided a platform for sharing ideas, building partnerships, and exploring future opportunities for academic and community growth.



Dr Sefora Alice Mkuzangwe, Director: Department of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance at UNIVEN

When welcoming attendees, Dr Sefora Alice Mkuzangwe, Director of the Department of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance at UNIVEN described this launch as transformative and a new chapter in South African education. The hub will provide multiple pathways for

students and expand access to education. She commended the initiative, noting that articulation becomes meaningful when it also benefits industries as well and “We have literally accepted a standard in terms of where the country should be going around articulation.”



Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean: Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture

Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean: Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, launched the Limpopo Articulation Hub, calling it a launchpad for the future that provides pathways for students to achieve their academic

dreams. The hub aims to dismantle barriers in higher education and produce locally relevant, globally competitive graduates. Prof Potgieter continued to state that, “We are not just creating programmes, we are creating future leaders.”



Prof Darren Lortan, from DUT – also the South Africa UPSET project leader

Prof Darren Lortan, the UPSET project leader virtually presented an overview of the initiative, explaining that it aims to translate the national articulation policy into coordinated implementation within the post-school education and training system. The project's focus is on establishing articulation networks between universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, with the goal of expanding access and improving quality. Prof Lortan noted that articulation by design, rather than informal arrangements, is becoming a mantra for the project. He highlighted that stakeholder engagement, curriculum alignment, and student support are crucial for successful articulation. Prof Lortan concluded by mentioning that "Learning never stops. We want to promote the idea of continuous lifelong learning, and our methodology is through the promotion of access through articulation."



Dr Emmanuel Mhlongo, HoD: Earth Science and UNIVEN UPSET team member

Dr Emmanuel Mhlongo, HoD: Earth Science and UNIVEN UPSET team member, provided an update on the UPSET initiative at UNIVEN. The University's articulation hub, housed in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, aims to provide articulation pathways that will enhance the academic and career pathways of TVET colleges graduates. The hub is currently prioritising Engineering and Agriculture programmes, with the goal of enabling

students to progress from TVET colleges to university programmes and eventually become accredited professionals. Dr Mhlongo noted that "the cornerstone of articulation is building trust among institutions, especially focusing so much on the design and the quality of the programmes." He added that the focus should be on how qualifications articulate with each other and how these align with the different career paths.



Dr Heidi Bolton, SAQA – Chief Researcher

Dr Heidi Bolton, Chief Researcher at SAQA, who also presented virtually extended a message of support, congratulating UNIVEN and partner colleges on the launch of the articulation hub. Dr Bolton stated that “you are enhancing life-

long learning and making the education and training and development system more flexible for diverse learners.” Her presentation touched on resources, including national policies, qualification frameworks, and existing articulation



L-R: Prof Jan Hlongwane from the University of Limpopo, Dr Tuwani Malima from Vhembe TVET College and Mr Khathutshelo Mudau from Madzivhandila College of Agriculture

Speakers at the launch of the UNIVEN Articulation Hub who gave message of support emphasised collaboration between institutions to benefit students. Prof Jan Hlongwane from the University of Limpopo said, “If you want to go fast to your destination, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together.” Dr Tuwani Malima from Vhembe TVET College highlighted the need for occupational programmes and industry partnerships, stating that, “we can’t implement occupational programmes without having a partnership with the industry.” Mr Khathutshelo Mudau from Madzivhandila College of Agriculture echoed this sentiment, saying, “When we work together, we always complement each other and achieve the intended goals.”

Dr Emmanuel Mhlongo came back to the podium to render closure and the way forward, he thanked attendees and speakers for their participation in the launch of the UNIVEN Articulation Hub, expressing gratitude to colleagues and institutions involved. He stated that “we are open endlessly” for partnerships. Dr Mhlongo outlined the way forward, mentioning upcoming activities and planning with Dr Odesheene Naicker. He thanked Prof Natasha Potgieter for her support and expressed excitement about the hub’s potential impact on the Limpopo Province.

UNIVEN Welcomes New Staff Through a Comprehensive Induction Programme



Some of the newly appointed staff members pose for a photo with some of the HR Staff members

The Human Resources Department at the University of Venda hosted a two-day induction programme for new staff members from 23 to 24 October 2025. The session, held at the Student Parliament, aimed to familiarise new employees with the University's operations, policies, and procedures, while orienting them on their roles and responsibilities within the UNIVEN community.

The programme featured informative presentations from various University departments and divisions, offering valuable

insights into UNIVEN's institutional structure, strategic priorities, and key initiatives.

On the first day, Professor Jabulani Makhubele, Director of the Directorate of Research and Innovation, spoke on behalf of the Directorate of Research and Innovation to outline its role in supporting research activities at the University.

"We do not conduct research ourselves; instead, we assist and facilitate it," he explained. Using a practical analogy, he added, "We need research to tell us why we have running sewage in our rivers."



Prof Jabulani Makhubele, Director: Directorate of Research and Innovation

Prof. Makhubele highlighted the Directorate's mission to promote transparent and impactful research, noting that the University provides funding support for postgraduate students, including staff members pursuing further studies. He further explained that published research outputs generate income for the University, which is managed through the directorate.

Echoing the recent remarks of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Makhubele stressed that research excellence begins internally and is strengthened by sound institutional policies and guidelines. He expressed confidence that the University of Venda, as a previously disadvantaged institution, has a strong potential to excel beyond its peers.



Ms Lucette Muila, Head: Compensation Unit, Human Resource Department

During her presentation on remuneration and benefits, Ms Lucette Muila actively engaged the audience by asking, "Who believes they are underpaid?" She then unpacked the University's Remuneration Policy, explaining how the system is structured around minimum and maximum pay levels to promote fairness and competitiveness.

She highlighted that UNIVEN is among the few institutions offering a Cost-to-Company (CTC) remuneration package—an approach that rewards high-performing employees while helping the University attract and retain top talent through fair, market-related compensation.

Beyond salaries, Ms Muila outlined a range of additional staff benefits, including fee

remission, leave provisions, remote working arrangements, and conditions of service that enable employees' children to study at UNIVEN free of charge. Other benefits discussed included UIF, medical aid, disability cover, provident fund, and bonus savings schemes.

In a separate session on health and wellness, Mr Reuben Mphaka, the service provider for the Employee Wellness Programme, spoke about the importance of supporting staff well-being as a key driver of institutional performance. He encouraged employees to make full use of the wellness resources available to them, emphasising that a healthy workforce underpins a more productive and successful University.



Ms Velencia Maupye, Head of Transformation in the Human Resources Department

Ms Velencia Maupye, Head of Transformation in the Human Resources Department, delivered a presentation on the role of the Transformation Office in advancing institutional transformation. She reflected on the legacy of the 2015 #FeesMustFall movement, noting that it prompted the Minister of Higher Education and Training to mandate universities to strengthen their oversight mechanisms for transformation.

Ms Maupye explained that at UNIVEN, transformation extends across teaching and learning, research, and innovation. She further highlighted that the University complies with the Employment Equity Act (EEA) and that the Transformation Office plays a pivotal role in shaping institutional culture and serving as the first point of contact for matters related to gender-based violence (GBV).



Mr Kenneth Mphaphuli, Head of the Organisational Development and Training Unit, Human Resources Department

Mr Kenneth Mphaphuli highlighted the crucial role his unit plays in advancing the University's strategic objectives through human capital development. "Our unit may be small, but its impact is significant," he remarked, underscoring the importance of skills development programmes that strengthen individual,

departmental, and institutional performance. He further emphasised the value of continuous learning and adaptation, noting that every new employee should receive proper training as part of their integration process. He also emphasised the importance of performance management in ensuring that individual contributions align with the University's overall strategic objectives.



Mrs Murunwa Nemathaga ICT Department (Left) and Mr Edward Dongola, Head of Campus Health Clinic (Right)

Mrs Murunwa Nemathaga from the ICT Department provided an overview of the four key sections within the department: ICT Support Services, Business Systems, Infrastructure, and Governance. She encouraged staff members to reach out to the department for assistance with connectivity, software, and other ICT-related needs.

Mr Edward Dongola from the Campus Health Clinic presented on the clinic's mission and development, highlighting its growth into one of the leading campus-based healthcare facilities. He noted that the clinic operates during the University's business hours and offers a 24-hour emergency medical service to support both staff and students.



Mr Mirero Makhado, Assistant International Relations Officer (Left) and Ms Tshilidzi Makhado, Manager: Investigations, Security Analysis and Liaison (Right)

Mr Mirero Makhado from the Directorate of International Relations and Partnerships outlined the Directorate's role in advancing the University's global mission through internationalisation, strategic partnerships, and student success initiatives. He reaffirmed the University's commitment to remaining locally relevant while being globally competitive and highlighted the Directorate's support in partnership development, mobility

programmes, international research, and visa processes.

Ms Tshilidzi Makhado, Manager of the Investigative Unit, explained that Protection Services is responsible for maintaining a safe and secure campus environment through crime prevention, security monitoring, and response measures. She also shared practical safety tips, such as securing offices, closing windows, and locking away valuables when unattended.



Mr Lesley Khosa, Senior Housing Officer-Directorate of Facilities Management

Mr Lesley Khosa from Facilities Management explained that the department is mandated to enhance student well-being and success by ensuring proper maintenance and providing reliable infrastructure services that support effective governance and management. Meanwhile, Mr Tinyiko Sibiya, Risk Officer in the

Strategy and Risk Department, highlighted the importance of risk management in proactively identifying, assessing, and mitigating institutional risks through systematic processes that strengthen University operations and decision-making.



Dr Anyway Mikioni representing the Directorate Community Engagement Entrepreneurship Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation (DCEEIIC)

Dr Anyway Mikioni reaffirmed the University's commitment to community engagement as a core academic function, highlighting ongoing efforts to integrate entrepreneurship into the curriculum to equip students with practical skills for meaningful societal impact.

The induction concluded on a positive note, with participants expressing appreciation for the informative sessions that deepened their understanding of UNIVEN's systems, values, and strategic direction. The event underscored the University's dedication to developing its human capital and nurturing a supportive, high-performing institutional culture.

ASSAf Annual Young Scientists Conference Honours Dr Mpho Tshikororo for Best Oral Presentation



Dr Mpho Tshikororo (Head of the Department of Agri-business and Agri-economics in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture) secured the Best Oral Presentation Award in the PhD holder category under the Equity in Climate Action sub-theme at the ASSAf Annual Young Scientists Conference (AYSC). The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), in partnership with the World Academy of Science Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Partner (TWAS-SAREP), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the National Research Foundation (NRF), and the South African National Space Agency (SANSA), jointly hosted the 2025 AYSC from 13 to 14 October

2025 at Anew Hotel, O.R Tambo International, Johannesburg. The conference theme, "Climate Change and Well-being," fostered a collaborative platform for scientific exchange, networking, and knowledge sharing among emerging African researchers across multiple disciplines. The programme featured three sub-themes: Resilience in Adaptation and Mitigation:

- A Holistic Approach
- Climate Change Impact on Human and Planetary Health
- Equity in Climate Action

Aligned with the S20 theme of Climate Change and Well-being, the AYSC provided early-career scholars with an opportunity to engage on the

nexus of food, water, land, energy, society, and climate dynamics. The conference underscored the complex challenges confronting African communities and highlighted the pivotal role of science in developing solutions. Addressing healthcare inequalities, environmental sustainability, technological progress, and socio-economic development requires strong scientific ecosystems driven by rigor, curiosity, and inclusivity. The conference advanced inclusive, cross-sectoral approaches that strengthen resilience and sustainability. The scientific contributions of early-career researchers remain vital in shaping the future well-being of both people and the planet. AYSC

continues to serve as a dynamic platform for researchers and innovators to exchange insights, forge partnerships, and map the trajectory of scientific progress across Africa and beyond. The Equity in Climate Action sub-theme emphasised the importance of socially just responses to climate change. It calls for policies and interventions that prioritise the needs of vulnerable communities, ensure active participation in climate-related decision-making, and promote solutions that acknowledge intersecting inequalities. Equity must remain central to adaptation and mitigation strategies to prevent further marginalisation and to support sustainable development outcomes.



Dr Tshikororo delivered an award-winning presentation titled “Advancing Agricultural Entrepreneurship Through Tailored Coping Mechanisms on Food Systems Synergy

Discrepancies Caused by Climate Change.” His research contributes to strengthening climate resilience and advancing equitable economic participation within agricultural value chains.