



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

The 2024 Annual Report for the University of Venda was compiled in terms of the Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions, published under Government Notice No R 464 of 9 June 2014.

Incorporated in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 and the Statute of the University of Venda.

Strategic Overview

Positioning the University of Venda for impact and relevance



Our Vision

A university leading in engaged scholarship



Our Mission

The University of Venda produces graduates that are locally relevant and globally competitive



Our Values



Quality and Excellence



Accountability



Transparency



Integrity



Respect



Diversity



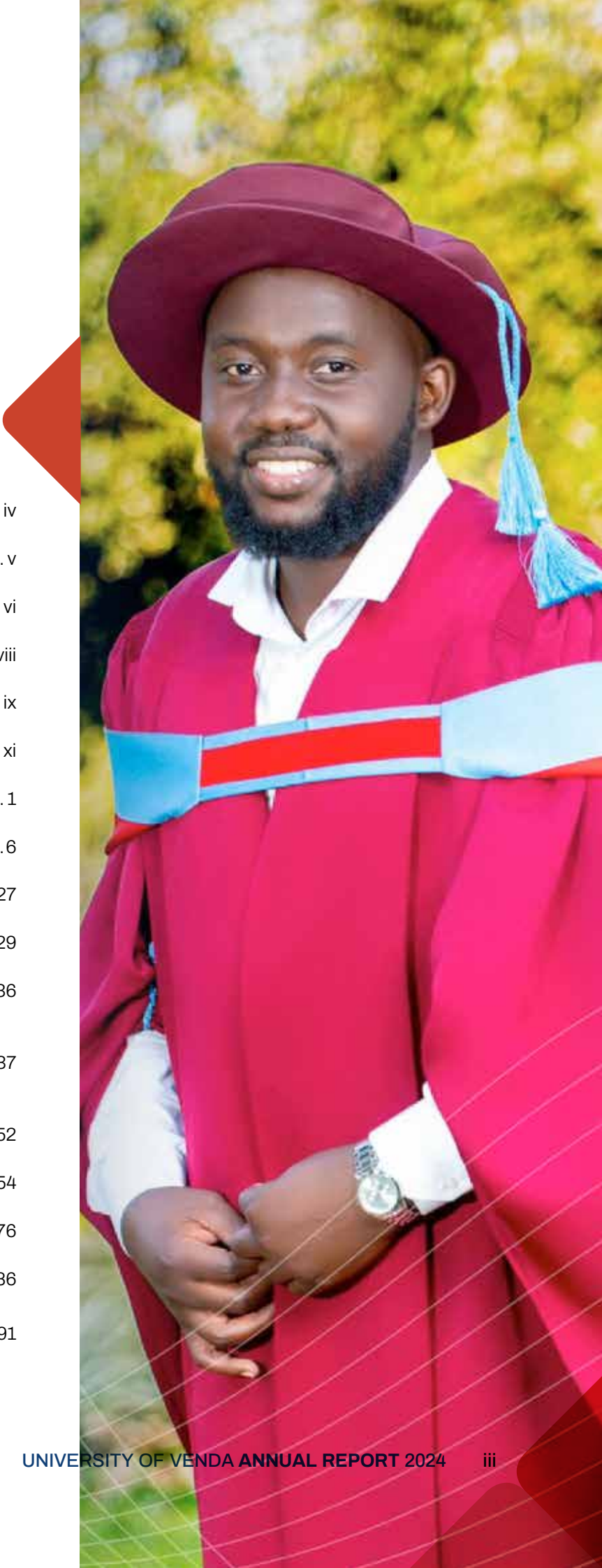
Social Responsibility and Community Engagement



Environmental Stewardship

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | | | |
|---------------|--|---------------|--|
| AI | Artificial Intelligence | FMCL | Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law |
| AOD | Acknowledgement of Debt | FSEA | Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture |
| APP | Annual Performance Plan | FET | Further Education and Training |
| BAC | Bid Adjudication Committee | FPIC | Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee |
| BIKS | Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems | FTE | Full-Time Equivalent |
| CESM | Classification of Educational Subject Matter | FTEN | First-Time Entering |
| CE | Community Engagement | GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer | GTCI | Green Technology Confucius Institute |
| CFO | Chief Financial Officer | HEMIS | Higher Education Management Information System |
| CHE | Council on Higher Education | HR | Human Resources |
| CHETL | Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning | HRC | Human Resources Committee |
| CPUT | Cape Peninsula University of Technology | HRM | Human Resources Management |
| CMA | Cash Management Application | HBUT | Hubei University of Technology |
| CSIR | Council for Scientific and Industrial Research | IC4LED | Innovation Champions for Local Economic Development |
| DBSA | Development Bank of Southern Africa | ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training | IEIBP | Integrated Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Biodiversity Plan |
| DRI | Directorate of Research and Innovation | IF | Institutional Forum |
| DoEL | Department of Employment and Labour | IMA | Invoice Management Automation |
| DUT | Durban University of Technology | IPQA | Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance |
| DVC | Deputy Vice-Chancellor | IRBA | Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors |
| ED | Executive Dean | IRP | International Relations and Partnerships |
| EDHE | Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education | KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| EE | Employment Equity | LR | Labour Relations |
| EMC | Executive Management Committee | LC-MS | Liquid Chromatography–Mass Spectrometry |
| ERP | Enterprise Resource Planning | MoA | Memorandum of Agreement |
| EVB | Entrepreneurship Venture Builder | MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| EXCO | Executive Committee of Council | MQA | Mining Qualifications Authority |
| FHS | Faculty of Health Sciences | nGAP | New Generation of Academic Professionals |
| FHSSE | Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education | | |
| FinCom | Finance Committee | | |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NRF | National Research Foundation |
| NSFAS | National Student Financial Aid Scheme |
| NUL | National University of Lesotho |
| NWU | North-West University |
| NYDA | National Youth Development Agency |
| PG | Postgraduate |
| PGCE | Postgraduate Certificate in Education |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PoA | Programme of Action |
| PQM | Programme and Qualification Mix |
| PSET | Post-School Education and Training |
| RMC | Risk Management Committee |
| RPC | Research and Publication Committee |
| SAC | Student Affairs Committee |
| SACSSP | South African Council for Social Service Professions |
| SAFooST | South African Association for Food Science and Technology |
| SAICA | South African Institute of Chartered Accountants |
| SAMRC | South African Medical Research Council |
| SANBI | South African National Biodiversity Institute |
| SANEDI | South African National Energy Development Institute |
| SAP | Systems Applications Products |
| SARChI | South African Research Chairs Initiative |
| SASBMB | South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology |
| SASPEN | South African Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition |
| SBDG | Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant |
| SDF | Spatial Development Framework |
| SEDA | Small Enterprise Development Agency |
| SER | Self-Evaluation Report |
| SET | Science, Engineering and Technology |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| SETA | Sector Education and Training Authority |
| SFFP | Skills for the Future Programme |
| SHE | Safety, Health and Environment |
| SMC | Senior Management Committee |
| SLA | Service Level Agreement |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| SRC | Student Representative Council |
| ST | Strategic Thrust |
| SBSA | Standard Bank of South Africa |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| SWEEP | Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme |
| TETA | Transport Education and Training Authority |
| THE | Times Higher Education |
| THENSA | Technological Higher Education Network South Africa |
| TIA | Technology Innovation Agency |
| UCDG | University Capacity Development Grant |
| UCfERI | UNIVEN Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation |
| UFS | University of Free State |
| UG | Undergraduate |
| UIGC | Innovative Univen Growth Company |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKZN | University of KwaZulu-Natal |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNIVEN | University of Venda |
| UP | University of Pretoria |
| WIL | Work Integrated Learning |
| WITS | University of Witwatersrand |
| YAEI | Youth African Entrepreneurship Institute |

Executive Management



Prof Ndanduleni B. Nthambeleni
Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Prof Eucebious
(Sebi) Lekalakala-
Mokgele
Deputy Vice-
Chancellor:
Teaching and
Learning



Prof Nosisi N. Feza
Deputy Vice-
Chancellor:
Research and
Postgraduate
Studies



Dr Robert L.
Martin
Deputy Vice-
Chancellor:
Corporate
Services



Dr Joel J. Baloyi
University
Registrar



Mr Lonwabo B.
Kraziya
Chief Financial
Officer

About this Report

The 2024 Annual Report of the University of Venda (UNIVEN) highlights the university's service delivery imperatives and its alignment with South Africa's broader transformation agenda and developmental priorities, as articulated in the National Development Plan Vision 2030. The NDP emphasises skills development as a critical driver of improved national productivity, higher income levels, and enhanced competitiveness of the South African economy.

In response, UNIVEN remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing the goals of the NDP by producing graduates equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to meet the evolving demands of both the local economy and global society. The University's academic, research, and community engagement activities are deliberately aligned to ensure that its graduates are not only locally relevant but also globally competitive.

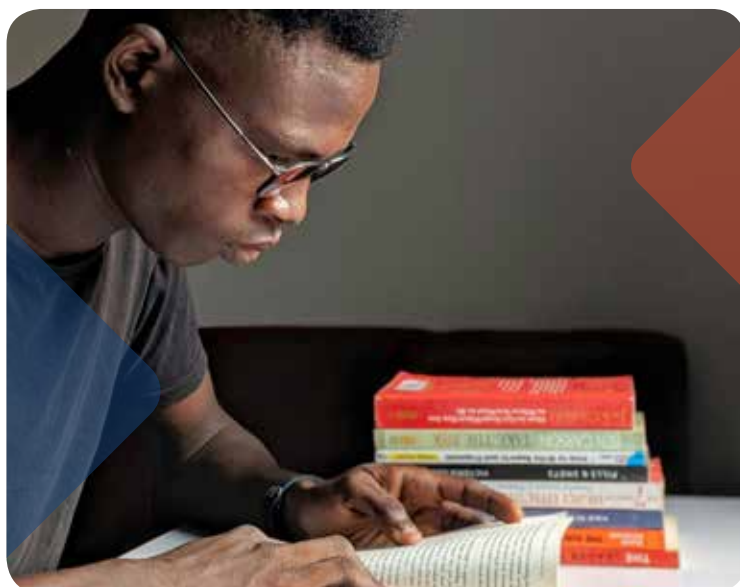
Located in the rapidly expanding town of Thohoyandou in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, UNIVEN is recognised as a rural-based institution. It is one of six South African public universities designated as comprehensive universities by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The University has strategically embraced this designation by undertaking an extensive process to incorporate new academic programmes into its Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM). These offerings are career-focused and aligned with the University's comprehensive mandate.

The University has undergone significant transformation since its inception in 1982. At each stage of this transformation, the University has aligned its vision and mission with community needs at local, regional, national, continental, and international levels. This process led to substantial changes in administrative governance and in the size and structure of the University's curriculum. It also attracted better-qualified staff and resulted in an improved student profile.

The University has established itself as a national asset through its niche, problem-oriented and project-based curriculum, with a strong track record in nurturing underprepared students into nationally competitive graduates. It has therefore become a significant player in the South African higher education landscape, making meaningful contributions to the country's and the region's human resource and development needs.

In line with its renewed strategic trajectory, UNIVEN is committed, through its **Vision 2025**, to becoming a leading university in engaged scholarship. To realise this long-term vision, the University has adopted a **Mission**, effective from 2021, of producing graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive.

This strategic shift represents a radical departure from the focus, operations, and structural configuration of the predecessor Strategic Plan (2016–2020). At the core of the University's strategic interventions is a deliberate effort to position the University for impact and relevance, not only within South Africa but also across the African continent and globally.



In pursuing its mission through the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2021–2025, the University is guided by a set of values and principles that shape its operational conduct. These include quality and excellence, accountability, transparency, integrity, respect, diversity, social responsibility, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.

The Council has endorsed several strategic thrusts and objectives to support the strategy-driven efforts of the University community and its stakeholders. The following are the four **strategic thrusts** for the University over the five-year strategic period (2021–2025), each with a corresponding set of **strategic objectives**.

Table 1: UNIVEN Strategic Thrusts and Objectives

| Strategic Thrusts | Strategic Objectives |
|--|--|
| Student-centeredness and engaged scholarship | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To enhance student well-being and success. 2. To enhance the curriculum and improve graduateness. 3. To strengthen the engagement of students, staff, and community stakeholders. 4. To enhance teaching and learning support. 5. To enhance research outputs for innovation and impact. |
| Entrepreneurial University | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. To develop an entrepreneurial culture. 7. To enhance financial sustainability. 8. To be an anchor institution for effective integrated local and regional development. 9. To develop enterprise. |
| Governance for outstanding scholarship | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. To promote effective institutional governance and management systems. 11. To enhance the corporate identity of UNIVEN. 12. To improve the governance of institutional information systems. 13. To strengthen systems and processes for infrastructure development and maintenance. 14. To enhance security on and around the campus, and in off-campus residences. |
| Linkages, PARTNERSHIP, and internationalisation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. To strengthen the University's local, regional, and international profile and visibility. |

Investment in skills and knowledge development that generates economic value for the country is vital. In implementing its Strategic Plan, the University recognises that human capital development in various forms is central to addressing South Africa's socio-economic challenges and building an inclusive society. This is a key consideration in the design of its intervention initiatives. These investments aim to promote access and equity for all, particularly for marginalised communities where the University is located.

Progress towards achieving the University's strategic objectives is continuously assessed through a quarterly monitoring process, which culminates in quarterly performance reviews. These results are communicated to both internal and external stakeholders, including Executive Management, Senate, and Council. The annual performance overview for 2024 is detailed in the subsequent sections of this report.



Notable Strategic Milestones

In 2024, UNIVEN recorded several strategic milestones that reflect its continued progress in academic excellence, research impact, institutional stability, and global positioning. These include:



Improved Ranking in the Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2024

UNIVEN was ranked fourth among South African universities under 50 years old in the 2024 *Times Higher Education* (THE) Young University Rankings, reflecting a notable improvement on its previous position. Published on 14 May 2024, the rankings evaluate young universities worldwide based on key performance indicators, including teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and international outlook. In 2024, a total of 673 institutions were assessed globally, up from 605 in 2023. UNIVEN is one of five South African universities featured in the rankings, alongside the University of Johannesburg (ranked highest nationally), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), North-West University (NWU), and the Durban University of Technology (DUT).



Partnership with the Mining Qualifications Authority

On 11 March 2024, UNIVEN formalised a strategic partnership with the Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The agreement establishes a collaborative framework for implementing targeted skills development initiatives within the mining and mineral sector. This partnership is expected to provide financial support to UNIVEN's needy students, upskill academic staff, and deliver socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities.



Empowering Future Chartered Accountants: SAICA and Standard Bank Partner for HDI Students

The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) and Standard Bank of South Africa (SBSA) have launched a transformative partnership project aimed at empowering students from historically disadvantaged institutions to succeed in the field of Chartered Accountancy. The initiative, launched on 25 April 2024 at the UNIVEN Student Parliament, aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for quality education and economic growth. SBSA is committed to funding fourth-year BCom Accounting Sciences students and providing all-inclusive support to help them pursue careers in accountancy.



Partnership with the South African Bureau of Standards

On 13 August 2024, UNIVEN formalised a collaborative partnership with the South African Bureau of Standards through the signing of an MoU in Pretoria. The agreement is designed to promote cooperation in research and development, knowledge exchange in standards development, internationalisation, human capacity development, and business growth. The partnership reflects a shared commitment to advancing transformation and contributing to national development. The signing ceremony highlighted the agility and responsiveness of both institutions in addressing future challenges and opportunities.



Strategic Collaboration to Strengthen Local Entrepreneurship

In recognition of the critical role that small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) play in South Africa’s economy, UNIVEN partnered with SBSA and other key stakeholders to host an Entrepreneurship Seminar from 11 to 14 March 2024 and held in Thohoyandou. The seminar aimed to upskill and empower SMME owners in the Vhembe District.

The initiative focused on enhancing entrepreneurial capacity, promoting peer-to-peer learning, and strengthening regional business networks. As SMMEs constitute approximately 98% of South African businesses and employ over half of the national workforce, this intervention aligns with UNIVEN’s commitment to community engagement and local economic development.



Groundbreaking Regional Entrepreneurship Venture Builder Initiative

UNIVEN is proud to be a founding partner in the Entrepreneurship Venture Builder (EVB), a bold new initiative led by the Technological Higher Education Network South Africa (THENSA) and supported by the UK-funded RISA programme. In collaboration with six other regional universities, the EVB aims to build a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem across Southern Africa. Focused on supporting entrepreneurs from historically disadvantaged universities and marginalised communities, the EVB offers tailored incubation, expert mentorship, and pathways to commercialisation, with a strong emphasis on inclusion and regional impact.

Initially hosted at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), the EVB will expand into a decentralised model across participating institutions, including UNIVEN, CPUT, the DUT, Tshwane University of Technology, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Central University of Technology, and Walter Sisulu University. This initiative marks a significant step towards turning research and innovation into sustainable ventures while empowering the next generation of African entrepreneurs.



Launch of the Joint Future Leaders’ Academy to Advance Green Technology Confucius Institute Programmes

UNIVEN hosted a delegation from Hubei University of Technology (HBUT), China, on 26-27 June 2024, to strengthen bilateral academic cooperation. A key highlight of the visit was the formal unveiling of the plaque for the HBUT–UNIVEN Future Leaders’ Academy, a strategic initiative jointly developed to cultivate globally minded graduates with strong leadership capabilities and a commitment to sustainable development. Rooted in the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and shared progress, this partnership reflects the growing alignment between the two institutions in advancing cross-border education and research excellence.

The cooperation will support expanded academic exchanges, joint research initiatives, faculty and student mobility, and cultural exchange. It also forms part of the broader China–Africa higher education cooperation framework, contributing to the joint construction of a shared future through education, innovation, and intercultural dialogue within the context of a new global development era. The Academy will offer short courses and postgraduate studies across all UNIVEN faculties to students interested in learning the Chinese language. This marks a significant step in UNIVEN’s commitment to internationalisation.



Strengthening International Collaboration through China-Africa-UNESCO Dialogue

UNIVEN participated in the inaugural meeting of the China-Africa-UNESCO High-Level People-to-People Exchange Mechanism, held in Beijing from September 5 to 7, 2024. The event, co-hosted by the China Association of Higher Education and the Association of African Universities, brought together higher education leaders to advance cooperation across academic and cultural spheres. UNIVEN's participation reaffirmed its strategic commitment to internationalisation, the strengthening of academic partnerships, and its role as an active contributor to global dialogues in higher education.



Advancing Renewable Energy Expertise through International Training in China

As part of its strategic focus on renewable energy innovation, UNIVEN strengthened its solar energy capacity through staff participation in the *International Solar Energy Technology and Application Training* at HBUT. The training, which included the use of PVSyst software for solar plant design, has informed curriculum enhancement, research development, and campus-level energy solutions. This initiative reflects UNIVEN's commitment to sustainability and international collaboration in science and technology.



Advancing Biogas Research

UNIVEN is part of a national Biogas Consortium supported by the Department of Science and Innovation, through the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). This initiative, led by UNISA in collaboration with UNIVEN, the University of Fort Hare, and the University of Zululand, aims to develop efficient biogas production technologies. Site visits by TIA in 2024 reviewed UNIVEN's contributions to the Centre of Competence in Environmental Biotechnology, underscoring the University's role in advancing sustainable energy research.



Hosting of the 28th SASBMB Congress

UNIVEN successfully hosted the congress of the South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (SASBMB), marking a historic milestone as the first previously disadvantaged university in South Africa to host such an event. The congress took place from July 7 to 10, 2024, in Polokwane, under the theme "*Biochemistry Leading the Future.*" The programme covered a broad range of scientific topics, including drug discovery, infectious and parasitic diseases, phytomedicine, non-communicable diseases, protein biochemistry, and computational and structural biology. The event attracted over 400 participants, the majority of whom were postgraduate students. It featured distinguished local and international speakers, including Professor Kieran Kirk and Professor Liesl Zühlke, who shared their research insights and perspectives. The congress underscored the shared commitment of UNIVEN and SASBMB to advancing scientific capacity and supporting the development of emerging researchers.

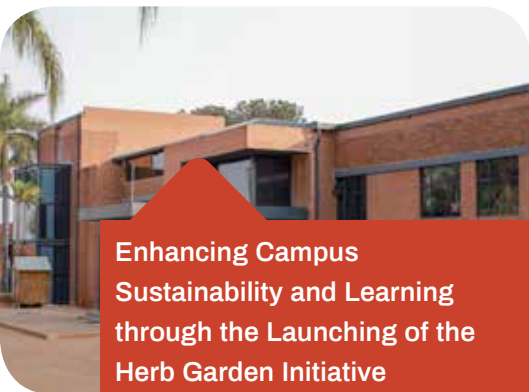


Advancing Healthcare Delivery and Research Capacity through the GENIUS-CARE Project

UNIVEN has secured significant research funding from the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) to support a pioneering health initiative led by Professor Lufuno Makhado. The project, titled *“Genotyping Integration: Enhancing RR-TB-HIV Co-infection Management in South African Primary Care Clinics – A Comparative Research Endeavour (GENIUS-CARE),”* has been awarded nearly R1 million over 18 months.

GENIUS-CARE aims to improve the management of patients co-infected with rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis (RR-TB) and HIV by integrating genotyping into the clinical responsibilities of Nurse-Initiated Management of Drug-Resistant TB (NIMDR-TB) practitioners in the KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces.

This initiative responds to SAMRC’s Grants Innovation and Product Development (GIPD) call for *“HDI Capacity Development Grants for Investigator-Initiated Research: HIV Implementation Science in the Clinical Setting.”* The project not only addresses critical health challenges but also contributes to strengthening research capacity, promoting intellectual property development, and promoting international collaboration, particularly through its partnership with Johns Hopkins University. GENIUS-CARE represents a strategic step forward in positioning UNIVEN at the forefront of translational health research and innovation.



Enhancing Campus Sustainability and Learning through the Launching of the Herb Garden Initiative

On 28 October 2024, UNIVEN officially launched a new herb garden, a development that underscores the institution’s commitment to sustainability, environmental stewardship, and experiential learning. Supported by the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in South Africa, this initiative marks a significant step in integrating eco-conscious practices into campus life. The garden is designed to serve as a living laboratory for students in disciplines such as botany, environmental science, and nutrition. In addition to supporting academic engagement, it also promotes holistic well-being, reduces the University’s ecological footprint, and strengthens community collaboration through shared environmental responsibility.



Strategic Engagement on Human Rights: Advancing Societal Impact through Rights-Based Dialogue

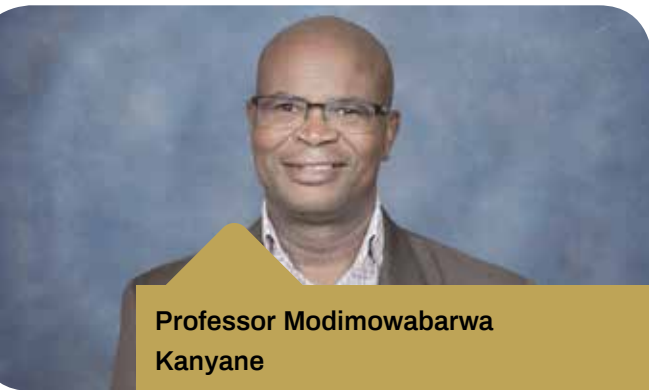
As part of its strategic commitment to social justice and transformative education, UNIVEN, through the Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples’ Rights in the Faculty of Management, Commerce, and Law (FMCL), hosted a high-level public lecture on 18 March 2024, marking Human Rights Day. The keynote address was delivered by Advocate Bongani Majola, former Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, who provided a compelling analysis of healthcare as a fundamental human right. His address highlighted systemic inequities within South Africa’s healthcare system and outlined strategic actions that individuals and communities can take to advance access, accountability, and equity in health service delivery.

The event is part of a broader institutional agenda to position UNIVEN as a thought leader in human rights education and public engagement, leveraging engaged scholarship to drive societal impact and promote constitutional values.



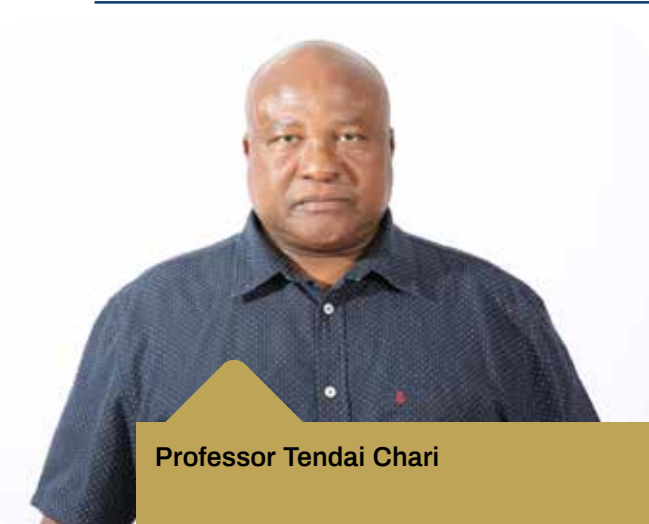
Recognition and Appointment of UNIVEN Academics to Prestigious Research Bodies

UNIVEN continues to consolidate its academic leadership and national standing through the recognition of its senior scholars by leading research and scientific institutions. These appointments reaffirm the University's strategic focus on research excellence, capacity development, and societal impact.



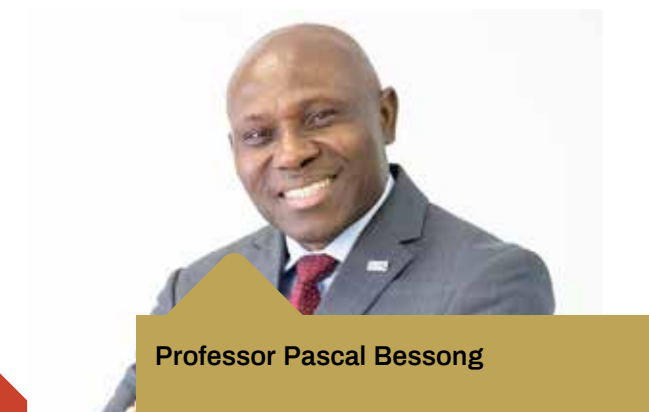
Professor Modimowabarwa Kanyane

Executive Dean of FMCL, has been awarded a **C2 rating by the National Research Foundation (NRF)**, recognising him as an established research scientist. This rating is conferred on researchers who their peers consistently acknowledge for the quality and impact of their scholarly contributions. Professor Kanyane's extensive record includes participation in over 100 national and international conferences, 136 published works (including 56 peer-reviewed outputs), and the successful supervision of 72 master's and doctoral graduates in the field of Public Administration.



Professor Tendai Chari

Associate Professor of Media Studies in the Department of English, Media Studies and Linguistics, has been awarded a **C1 rating by the NRF**. This marks a significant progression from his previous C3 rating, recognising him as an established researcher with a solid international standing in his field. Professor Chari's record includes participation in over 65 local and international conferences, as well as more than 80 publications, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and books. He has co-edited six books, most recently "*Military, Politics and Democratisation in Southern Africa*" (Palgrave Macmillan) and "*Communication Rights in Africa*" (Routledge). He has also supervised over 58 postgraduate students to completion, making significant contributions to academic development and scholarship in his field.



Professor Pascal Bessong

Research Professor in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture (FSEA), has been honoured with the **Gold Merit Award** by **SAMRC** for his outstanding contribution to health research. Presented at the 10th SAMRC Merit Awards in Cape Town, this prestigious accolade recognises senior scientists whose work has had a profound impact on health in developing countries. Professor Bessong has secured over R80 million in research funding, significantly enhancing scientific infrastructure and postgraduate training capacity in health sciences.



Professor Addmore Shonhai

has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa, acknowledging his significant scientific contributions. His research, based in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, centres on the stress response mechanisms of infectious agents, an area of critical importance for public health interventions.



Professor Michael Chimonyo

has been elected to the **Academy of Science of South Africa**, the apex body for science and scholarship in the country. His interdisciplinary research addresses key challenges in animal science, food security, and rural development. With nearly 50 PhD graduates successfully supervised, his election reflects the growing influence of UNIVEN's research on both national and regional development agendas.

These achievements reinforce UNIVEN's strategic intent to be a centre of academic excellence and a catalyst for innovation-driven, inclusive development.





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Report from the Chairperson of the Council

Mr JM Lekgetha
Chairperson of Council

Council Governance and Strategic Oversight

The UNIVEN Council serves as the institution's highest decision-making body. It is responsible for ensuring good governance, setting strategic direction, overseeing financial policies, ensuring sustainability and performance, maintaining quality, and establishing a strong reputation for the university. The Council fulfils these responsibilities in accordance with the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, other applicable laws, and the University's Statute.

Duly constituted in accordance with the Act and the Statute, the Council continued to fulfil its oversight responsibilities across all areas of the University's operations during the reporting period. It exercised its governance role effectively, ensuring that appropriate checks and balances were in place for the work of the executive management team. As outlined in the Council Charter, Executive Management is responsible for the day-to-day administration and operational delivery of the University, in alignment with the strategic priorities and objectives approved by the Council and its committees.

In discharging its responsibilities, the Council is guided by the principles of the King IV Report on Corporate Governance, as well as all relevant legislation, standards, and codes applicable to public higher education institutions. The Council remains committed to providing ethical and effective leadership in the development and execution of the University's strategy.

Strategic Plan Implementation Progress

Through its Council-approved five-year Strategic Plan (2021–2025), UNIVEN seeks to reposition itself for local relevance and enhanced societal impact, while ensuring global competitiveness. The year 2024 marked the fourth year of implementation, during which significant milestones were achieved across various areas. The University continues to make steady progress towards achieving the strategic objectives and targets set to strengthen its core mission. This is evidenced by the University's performance against a range of measurable indicators of academic success during the reporting period, as detailed in the subsequent sections of this report.

Campus Stability

The University maintained a stable and conducive campus environment during the period under review, supported by responsible students and union leadership. This stability enabled the uninterrupted continuation of the academic programme. A secure and orderly campus is essential to advancing the University's core mandate of engaged teaching and learning, research, and innovation, thereby strengthening its contribution to regional and national economic development.

UNIVEN's Commitment to Engaged Scholarship and Academic Excellence

UNIVEN continues to prioritise its vision of becoming a leader in engaged scholarship. During the reporting period, the institution focused on strengthening student learning experiences, enhancing engaged teaching, and increasing high-impact research outputs. Emphasis was also placed on nurturing an entrepreneurial culture and building strategic academic and research partnerships. Continuous improvement in programme quality, institutional governance, and academic and administrative leadership remained central to advancing student success and overall institutional effectiveness.

Programme Quality Reviews

By the end of 2024, all programmes in UNIVEN's PQM had successfully undergone reaccreditation in line with the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) revised Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). This process also included approval by DHET and, where applicable, accreditation by relevant professional bodies. **Table 2** outlines the progress made during the reporting period on academic programmes submitted for review, accreditation, and registration.

Table 2: Reviewed Academic Programmes

| Academic programmes | | Progress status |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1. | Bachelor of Commerce in Industrial Psychology | Reviewed and approved |
| 2. | Bachelor of Education Honours in Early Childhood Education | |
| 3. | Bachelor of Social Work | Reviewed |
| 4. | Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (African Knowledge-Based Agriculture stream) | |
| 5. | Bachelor of Education Honours in Educational Management | |
| 6. | Bachelor of Arts Honours in Tshivenda | |
| 7. | Bachelor of Arts Honours in Siswati (Generic) | |
| 8. | Bachelor of Arts Honours in Northern Sotho | |
| 9. | Bachelor of Arts Honours in Xitsonga | |
| 10. | Bachelor of Earth Science in Mining and Environmental Geology | |
| 11. | Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning | |
| 12. | Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Agribusiness Management | |
| 13. | Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Agricultural Economics | |
| 14. | Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Animal Sciences | |
| 15. | Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Horticultural Sciences | |
| 16. | Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Plant Production | |
| 17. | Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Soil Science | |
| 18. | Bachelor of Earth Science in Hydrology and Water Resources | |

Performance Highlights: Progress Against Strategic Objectives

During the period under review, UNIVEN achieved several key milestones aligned with its strategic objectives, thereby strengthening its core academic and research mission. Notable highlights include:

- ▶ **Graduate Output:** A total of 3,208 graduates were conferred qualifications, representing a 20.9% graduation rate. This cohort included:
 - › 72 doctoral degrees (PhDs)
 - › 168 master's degrees
 - › 459 postgraduate qualifications below master's level
 - › 2,509 undergraduate degrees
- ▶ **Student Success:** An overall student success rate of 80% was achieved, measured against the ministerial-approved target of 85%.
- ▶ **Research Excellence:**
 - › 41 NRF-rated researchers, comprising 27 males and 14 females
 - › 28 postdoctoral research fellows
 - › 3 research professors
 - › 35 special category academics and adjunct professors
 - › 1 patent filed, contributing to innovation and knowledge transfer

These results reflect steady progress in the University's pursuit of academic excellence, research impact, and graduate success.





Effective Ethical Leadership and Corporate Citizenship

The UNIVEN Council has established several policies, procedures, and processes to ensure that the University's core business is conducted ethically and that it serves the interests of diverse stakeholders, recognising the impact of education and skills on the economy, society, and the environment.

Various instruments have been implemented to foster a strong ethical culture among staff, management, and members of institutional governing structures. These include, among others, the Code of Conduct for Council and Staff, aligned with the King IV Report on Corporate Governance, and conditions of service documents that guide ethical conduct and behaviour. The Code of Conduct is shared with all Council members, and both management and Council members are required to declare any conflict of interest annually.

The anonymous tip-off system, managed independently, serves as a deterrent against corruption. Additionally, all employees and service providers are regularly encouraged to disclose any potential conflicts of interest through routine declarations of interest.

Statement on Effective Governance and Risk Management

UNIVEN is governed by a Council composed of both external and internal members, each serving a five-year term. However, student leaders who are part of the Council serve a one-year term. Council members represent various constituencies from within and outside the University, bringing a wide range of skills and expertise in areas such as law, finance, auditing, human resources, infrastructure, and human rights. This diversity, together with the academic and professional experience of the Executive Management, creates a balanced mix of expertise to address the matters brought before the Council effectively.

A Risk Management Committee (RMC) supports the Council, Vice-Chancellor, and Executive Management in managing residual, current, and emerging risks. The RMC is primarily responsible for discharging risk management and control duties in line with applicable legislation and corporate governance principles. The subcommittee, chaired by an independent external member, met four times in 2024.

Governance of Information Technology

To adequately support its Strategy 2025, UNIVEN continued implementing the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Governance Framework, as adopted and approved by the Council. The ICT general controls were reviewed, and a comprehensive testing process for ICT Disaster Recovery was conducted throughout the year to ensure that an adequate and effective ICT system is maintained.

Compliance with the Overall National Statutory Framework

The Council has delegated to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) the responsibility of ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation, statutory requirements, Council directives, and the Code of Conduct, as well as the critical role of enterprise risk management, which includes assessing organisational risks and their management. Monitoring compliance with the Code forms part of the ARC's mandate.



UNIVEN's Governance, Ethics, and Compliance function provides ongoing advice on new regulations and necessary institutional adjustments to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations. While this is an ongoing process, I am pleased to report that the University is fully compliant with statutory provisions related to human resources, finance, student affairs, occupational health and safety, programme accreditation, and associated built environment regulations.

Remuneration of Councillors

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure effective governance of the University's finances and to avoid conflicts of interest. Accordingly, external members of the Council receive an honorarium per meeting in recognition of their role and commitment to the institution. Members are also reimbursed for travel expenses within the prescribed rates approved by the Council. The Council reviews these rates periodically, adjusting for inflation to ensure reimbursements remain reasonable. Lastly, I would like to thank all Council members for their commitment and excellent contributions to UNIVEN's recorded successes.

MR S B MAMPEULE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE COUNCIL



The Council's Statement on Governance

The Council governs the University within the framework of applicable laws and the Statute. It upholds the principles of accountability, integrity, and transparency, as outlined in the King IV Report on Corporate Governance. Its composition complies with statutory governance requirements, ensuring effective oversight. Fully cognisant of its legal and ethical responsibilities under the Higher Education Act, the Council is committed to governing UNIVEN as a public institution dedicated to becoming a leader in engaged scholarship. These responsibilities are formally defined in both the Institutional Statute and the Act.

The Council Composition and Meeting Attendance

UNIVEN Council consists of a mix of internal and external members who are elected, appointed, or designated in terms of the Institutional Statute. Its composition is designed to ensure compliance with the Higher Education Act and to promote stakeholder participation in university governance.

In 2024, the UNIVEN Council was constituted in terms of Section 16(1) of the Institutional Statute as presented in **Table 3:**

Table 3: UNIVEN Council Composition

| Category | Incumbent | Term |
|--|--|------------------------|
| 1. Section 16.1 (a) The Vice-Chancellor | Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | - |
| 2. Section 16.1 (b) Deputy Vice-Chancellors | Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele (DVC: Teaching and Learning) | - |
| | Prof N.N. Feza (DVC: Research and Postgraduate Studies) | - |
| | Dr R.L. Martin (DVC: Corporate Services) | - |
| 3. Section 16.1(c) Chief Financial Officer | Mr L.B. Kraziya (Chief Financial Officer) | - |
| 4. Section 16.1 (d) Three members with specific competencies in a field designated by the Council | Mr S.B. Mampeule *Human Rights | 05/02/2020-22/11/2024 |
| | Mr B.P. Thompson (Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee) *Human Resources | 05/02/2020-22/11/2024 |
| | Mr M.N. Mangena (Chairperson of the Appeals Committee) *Legal | 05/02/2020-22/11/2024 |
| 5. Section 16.1 (e) Five persons appointed by the Minister | Mr M.J. Lekgetha (Chairperson) | 14/01/2020-22/11/2024 |
| | Ms N.V. Makhari (Deputy Chairperson) | 14/01/2020-22/11/2024 |
| | Dr S.E. Smith (Chairperson of the Finance Committee) | 17/12/2021-22/11/2024 |
| | Mr T. Telite | 14/01/2020-22/11/2024 |
| | Dr O. van Heerden (Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee) | 14/01/2020-22/11/2024 |
| 6. Section 16.1 (f) One person appointed by the Premier of the Limpopo Province | Mr M.E. Selomo (Chairperson of the Student Affairs Committee) | 21/11/2014-31/12/2023 |
| | Replaced by Dr A.M. Mashilo | 02/04//2024-22/11/2024 |
| 7. Section 16.1 (g) Two persons elected by the Senate from among its members | Dr N.S. Nethengwe | 27/05/2020- 22/11/2024 |
| | Prof T. van der Walt | 27/05/2020- 22/11/2024 |

| Category | Incumbent | Term |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| 8. Section 14.6 (h) Two persons elected by the Convocation | Mr M.S. Motadi | 05/08/2021- 22/11/2024 |
| | Mr R. Mushweu | 05/08/2021- 22/11/2024 |
| 9. Section 16.1 (i) Two persons elected by the donors | Vacant | - |
| | Dr J.M. Mokoela | 10/11/2021- 22/11/2024 |
| 10. Section 16.1 (j) Two Student Representative Council members, in accordance with the rules | Mr J.L. Ndaka | 13/10/2023-10/10/2024 |
| | Replaced by Mr V.K. Mokoena | 13/10/2024 |
| | Mr N.S. Maduwa | 13/10/2023- 10/10/2024 |
| | Replaced by Mr L. Mphaphuli | 13/10/2024 |
| 11. Section 16.1 (k) One academic employee of the University, other than members of the Senate, elected by academic employees. | Mr N.D. Tshithavhane | 10/02/2020-22/11/2024 |
| 12. Section 16.1 (l) One member of the administrative employees of the University elected by the administrative employees | Mr J.A.M. Mogashoa | 07/02/2020-22/11/2024 |
| 13. Section 16.1 (m) One member of the service employees of the University elected by the service employees | Mr A.D. Maphiswana | 07/02/2020-22/11/2024 |
| 14. Section 16.1 (o) One person designated by the Thulamela Municipality | Ms A.S. Rambuda | 01/02/2022-22/11/2024 |
| 15. Section 16.1 (p) Other persons, not exceeding five in number, designated by such bodies as determined by the Council | Mr K.E. Mabelebele (Chairperson of the Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee) *Construction Industry Development Board | 28/01/2022- 22/11/2024 |
| | Prof S. Mosoetsa *Human Sciences Research Council | 23/11//2019-22/11/2024 |
| | Prof I.O.G. Moche *NRF | 25/05/2021- 22/11/2024 |
| | Dr N.R. Mbhele (Chairperson of Student Affairs Committee effective 26 April 2024) *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) | 23/11//2019-22/11/2024 |
| | Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase *Local Traditional Authority | 21/11/2014-22/11/2024 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Notes:

- ▶ Mr J.L. Ndaka's term of office expired. Mr V.K. Mokoena replaced him
- ▶ Mr N.S. Maduwa's term of office expired. Mr L. Mphaphuli replaced him

The Council ordinarily meets at least four times annually to fulfil its governance responsibilities. In the year under review, the Council convened a total of ten meetings, five of which were special, demonstrating its commitment to effective governance and oversight. In addition, a two-day induction workshop was held to orient new members.

Table 4 presents the number of Council meetings held during the reporting period, along with the attendance records of individual Council members.

Table 4: Council Meeting Attendance

| NAME | 14/02/2024 to 15/02/2024 (Induction Workshop) | 19/04/2024 (Special) | 26/04/2024 | 26/04/2024 (Special) | 28/06/2024 | 27/09/2024 | 14/10/2024 (Special) | 27/11/2024 (Special) | 29/11/2024 | 05/12/2024 (Special) | Number of meetings attendance |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Mr J.M. Lekgetha | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 2. Ms N.V. Makhari | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 3. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 4. Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele | √ | x | x | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 07/10 |
| 5. Dr R.L. Martin | √ | x | x | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | 06/10 |
| 6. Mr L.B. Kraziya | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 7. Prof N.N. Feza | √ | x | x | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 07/10 |
| 8. Mr S.B. Mampeule | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | 08/10 |
| 9. Mr B.P. Thompson | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 10. Mr M.N. Mangena | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | 08/10 |
| 11. Dr S.E. Smith | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | √ | 08/10 |
| 12. Mr T. Telite | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 09/10 |
| 13. Dr O. van Heerden | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | 09/10 |
| 14. Mr M.E. Selomo | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 15. Dr N.S. Nethengwe | √ | x | x | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 08/10 |
| 16. Prof T. van der Walt | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 17. Mr N.D. Tshithavhane | √ | x | x | x | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | 05/10 |
| 18. Mr A.D. Maphiswana | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | x | √ | x | 06/10 |
| 19. Mr J.A.M. Mogashoa | √ | x | x | x | √ | x | x | x | √ | x | 03/10 |
| 20. Prof S. Mosoetsa | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 08/10 |
| 21. Dr N.R. Mbhele | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 22. Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase | √ | x | x | x | √ | x | x | √ | x | x | 03/10 |
| 23. Mr R. Mushweu | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | x | √ | √ | x | 03/10 |
| 24. Mr M.S. Motadi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 25. Mrs M.T. Mulaudzi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | 09/10 |
| 26. Prof I.O.G. Moche | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | √ | 08/10 |

| NAME | 14/02/2024 to 15/02/2024 (Induction Workshop) | 19/04/2024 (Special) | 26/04/2024 | 26/04/2024 (Special) | 28/06/2024 | 27/09/2024 | 14/10/2024 (Special) | 27/11/2024 (Special) | 29/11/2024 | 05/12/2024 (Special) | Number of meetings attendance |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 27. Mr K.E. Mabelebele | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 28. Ms A.S. Rambuda | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | √ | 01/10 |
| 29. Mr J.L. Ndaka | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | - | - | - | 06/07 |
| 30. Mr N.S. Maduwa | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | - | - | - | 07/07 |
| 31. Mr V.K. Mokoena | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | √ | √ | x | 02/03 |
| 32. Mr L. Mphaphuli | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | √ | √ | √ | 03/03 |
| 33. Dr J.M. Mokoete | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |
| 34. Dr A.M. Mashilo | - | - | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | x | 05/08 |
| 35. Dr J.J. Baloyi (Secretary) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10/10 |

Legends:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member

At each meeting, Council members were required to declare any conflicts of interest and uphold the confidentiality of proceedings, ensuring sound governance and responsible knowledge management. The Council consistently applied the Code of Practice and Conduct, as well as the Code of Ethical Behaviour and Practice, throughout all its meetings.

Governance Matters

During the period under review, the UNIVEN Council dealt with several critical governance matters aimed at enhancing institutional effectiveness and compliance. In support of sound governance and operational efficiency, the Council approved a number of key institutional policies and plans, including the following:

- ▶ Anti-Plagiarism Policy
- ▶ Assessment Policy
- ▶ E-Learning Policy
- ▶ Monitoring and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Policy
- ▶ Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Policy and Procedure
- ▶ Bring-Your-Own-Device Policy
- ▶ Change Management Policy
- ▶ Disaster Recovery Plan
- ▶ ICT Project Management Framework

- ▶ Laptop and ICT Hardware Policy
- ▶ Policy on Learning Development
- ▶ Certification Policy
- ▶ Policy on Termination of Employment
- ▶ Student Support Policy
- ▶ Policy on Invigilation

The Council also deliberated on and approved the following additional governance matters to strengthen institutional oversight and strategic direction:

- ▶ Review of the University of Venda Institutional Statute
- ▶ Selection of the Chancellor of the University of Venda
- ▶ 2025 University Annual Plan
- ▶ 2023 External Audit Planning Memorandum
- ▶ Annual Evaluation of External Auditors
- ▶ Internal Audit 2025 Annual Plan
- ▶ Audit and Risk Committee's 2025 Work Plan
- ▶ Governance, Ethics and Compliance (GEC) 2025 Work Plan
- ▶ Interim Audit Planning Memorandum for 2024 Financial Year
- ▶ Change in Accounting Policy from Revaluation to Cost Model
- ▶ 2024 Mid-year Report
- ▶ 2025 Annual Performance Plan (APP)
- ▶ 2025 Finance Committee Work Plan
- ▶ Revised Finance Committee Terms of Reference
- ▶ 2025 Budget
- ▶ Human Resources Committee (HRC) 2025 Work Plan
- ▶ Institutional Performance Report for the 2023 Performance Cycle
- ▶ Student Affairs Committee 2025 Work Plan
- ▶ Terms of Reference for the Student Affairs Committee
- ▶ Revised Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee Terms of Reference
- ▶ Revised Spatial Development Framework
- ▶ Review of Cybersecurity Protocols
- ▶ Approval of the Student Representative Council (SRC) Constitution

- ▶ 2023/2024 SRC Programme of Action
- ▶ 2024 Combined Assurance Plan
- ▶ Investigation Protocols
- ▶ Recommendations on the Governance Maturity Assessment
- ▶ Outcome Appeals for Students and Staff
- ▶ The University of Venda Annual Report and Audited Consolidated Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023
- ▶ 2024 Salary Increases for Executive Managers

These reviews and approvals demonstrate the University's continued alignment with its Vision and Mission, Institutional Statute, and the broader national legislative framework governing higher education in South Africa.

Council Committees: Roles and Mandates

In accordance with Section 29 of the Higher Education Act, Section 34 of the UNIVEN Statute, and Principle 8 of the King IV Report, the University Council has established six committees to support effective governance and oversight. Each committee is chaired by an independent, non-executive Council member with the requisite expertise and includes external members who are not employees or students at the University.

The committees convene quarterly, ahead of ordinary Council meetings, to which they submit reports and recommendations. All committees operate under formally approved terms of reference outlining their roles and responsibilities. Accurate records of all committee and Council meetings are maintained. During the reporting period, the following Council committees were operational:

- a. Executive Committee
- b. Appeals committee
- c. Audit and Risk Committee
- d. Finance Committee
- e. Human Resources Committee
- f. Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee
- g. Student Affairs Committee



Executive Committee

Chairperson: Mr M.J. Lekgetha



The Executive Committee (EXCO) advises the Council on matters deemed essential for the effective and efficient governance of the University. It is empowered to address urgent matters on behalf of the Council, subject to ratification or review at the next scheduled Council meeting. EXCO also considers reports from all Council committees and makes appropriate recommendations to the Council.

During the reporting period, EXCO convened nine meetings, including five special meetings.

Table 5: EXCO Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 12/04/2024 | 14/04/2024 (Special) | 07/06/2024 (Special) | 25/06/2024 (Special) | 09/09/2024 (Special) | 09/09/2024 | 10/10/2024 (Special) | 18/11/2024 | 18/11/2024 (Special) | Number of meetings attended |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Mr M.J. Lekgetha | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 8/9 |
| 2. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 3. Ms N.V. Makhari | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 4. Dr R.L. Martin | √ | x | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | 7/9 |
| 5. Mr L.B. Kraziya | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 6. Prof N.N. Feza | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 7. Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 8. Mr B.P. Thompson | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 9. Mr M.N. Mangena | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 10. Dr S.E. Smith | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 11. Dr O. van Heerden | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 12. Dr A.M. Mashilo | - | - | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | 6/7 |
| 13. Prof S. Mosoetsa | √ | x | x | x | x | x | √ | √ | √ | 4/9 |
| 14. Dr N.R. Mbhele | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |
| 15. Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | x | √ | √ | 6/9 |
| 16. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9/9 |

Legend:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member

Appeals Committee

Chairperson: Mr N.M. Mangena



The Appeals Committee is responsible for hearing appeals from staff and students regarding the outcomes of disciplinary processes. Its decisions are submitted to the Council for ratification.

During the reporting period, no appeal cases were brought before the Committee.

Audit and Risk Committee

Chairperson: Dr O. van Heerden



The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) advises and supports the Council on matters relating to financial governance, risk oversight, and audit integrity. It also serves as the primary liaison between the Council and the external auditors. The ARC assists the Council in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities, including:

- ▶ Ensuring the integrity of financial reporting, internal controls, and financial risk management.
- ▶ Monitoring compliance with applicable legislative, statutory, and regulatory requirements.
- ▶ Reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's performance management system and reporting on predetermined objectives.
- ▶ Overseeing institutional risk assessment and management through the Risk Management Committee (RMC).
- ▶ Implementing a combined assurance model to coordinate assurance activities.
- ▶ Overseeing both internal and external audit functions.

- ▶ Ensuring procedures are in place for the receipt, retention, and treatment of complaints related to financial controls and audit matters.
- ▶ Approving the selection and appointment of external auditors, who report directly to the ARC and may not undertake non-audit services without prior approval.

The committee's mandate may be expanded by the Council to include additional responsibilities within its scope.

In the year under review, the ARC held six meetings, two of which were special.

Table 6: ARC Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 15/03/2024 | 15/04/2024 (Special) | 20/05/2024 | 16/08/2024 | 18/10/2024 | 13/11/2024 (Special) | Number of meetings attended |
|--|------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr O. van Heerden | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 2. Ms N.V. Makhari | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 3. Prof I.O.G. Moche | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | 4/6 |
| 4. Mr T. Telite | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 5. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 6. Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele | √ | x | √ | x | √ | x | 3/6 |
| 7. Dr R.L. Martin | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 8. Prof N.N. Feza | √ | x | √ | √ | x | √ | 5/6 |
| 9. Mr L.B. Kraziya | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 10. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | 5/6 |
| 11. Ms Z. Nkosi (External Expert) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 12. Mr K.P. Ravhudzulo (External Expert) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 13. Mr R. Tshimomola (External Expert) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |

Legend:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member

Key Outputs of the ARC

During the reporting period, the ARC fulfilled its governance and oversight responsibilities through the review, endorsement, and/or approval of several key instruments and initiatives. These included:

- ▶ 2024 Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan
- ▶ 2025 Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan
- ▶ Internal Audit 3-Year Rolling Plan
- ▶ 2025 Internal Audit Annual Operational Plan
- ▶ UNIVEN 2025 Combined Assurance Implementation Plan

- ▶ Bring-Your-Own-Device Policy
- ▶ Change Management Policy
- ▶ Disaster Recovery Plan
- ▶ ICT Project Management Framework
- ▶ Laptop and ICT Hardware Policy
- ▶ Use of Ad Hoc Hours
- ▶ 2025 Governance, Ethics, and Compliance Work Plan
- ▶ 2025 Internal Audit Plan
- ▶ 2025 Annual Performance Plan
- ▶ 2024 Mid-Year Report

The Audit and Risk Committee also considered a wide range of strategic, financial, compliance, and risk-related matters, as outlined below:

- ▶ Draft 2023 Unaudited Consolidated Annual Financial Statements
- ▶ Audit Planning Memorandum for the year ended 31 December 2023
- ▶ CFO Reports for the period ended 31 December 2023 and Quarters 1–3 of 2024
- ▶ University Innovation and Growth Company (UIGC) Management Accounts (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Internal Audit Quarterly Activity Report (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Combined Assurance Status Report (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Faculties
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on UIGC (ad hoc audit)
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on the Control Environment of UNIVEN
- ▶ External Audit Report on the Control Environment of UNIVEN
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Follow-up of Previous Internal Audit Findings
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Institutional Reporting – Review of Mid-year Report
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on the Review of the Draft 2023 Consolidated Annual Financial Statements
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Litigation Management
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on the Audit of Predetermined Objectives (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)

- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Library Services
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Infrastructure and Capital Project Management
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Academic Administration
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Human Resources Management
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Hemis/MIS/Enrolment Plan
- ▶ Internal Audit Report on Occupational Health and Safety
- ▶ Risk Management Committee Report (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ UNIVEN Strategic Risk Register (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Use of Key Risk Indicators to Report on Key Risks
- ▶ Risk Thresholds and Tolerance Levels
- ▶ Report on Significant Cases of Employee Conflict of Interest, Misconduct, or Fraud (period ended 31 December 2023 and Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Report on Litigation and Student Cases (Quarters 1–4 of 2024)
- ▶ Investigation Protocols
- ▶ Report from Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance (IPQA)
- ▶ ICT Performance Reports (period ended 31 December 2023 and Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ UNIVEN Audit Management Action Plan (period ended 31 December 2023 and Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ UIGC Audit Action Plan (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Report on Significant Losses (period ended 31 December 2023 and Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Infrastructure Projects Progress Reports (Quarters 1–4 of 2024)
- ▶ UNIVEN Insurance Portfolio for 2024
- ▶ Governance, Ethics, and Compliance Quarterly Activity Report (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Legislative and Compliance Universe (Quarters 1–3 of 2024)
- ▶ Change in Accounting Policy from Revaluation to Cost Model
- ▶ 2023 Annual Performance Assessment Report
- ▶ Report on the Evaluation of External Auditors (period ended 31 December 2023)
- ▶ UNIVEN Self-Evaluation Report (SER) Improvement Plan
- ▶ 2025 UNIVEN Budget

Finance Committee

Chairperson: Dr. S.E. Smith



The Finance Committee (FinCom), directly accountable to the Council, oversees financial governance and advises on key financial matters, including the approval of the University's budget, annual financial statements, borrowings, and financial risk policies. It monitors the implementation and effectiveness of financial management policies and procedures. Its key oversight areas include:

- ▶ Borrowings and investments
- ▶ Budget preparation, implementation, and monitoring
- ▶ Insurance coverage and obligations
- ▶ Financial reporting and application of accounting policies

During the reporting period, FinCom held five meetings, including one special meeting.

Table 7: FinCom Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 08/03/2024 | 15/04/2024 (Special) | 23/05/2024 | 06/08/2024 | 22/10/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr S.E. Smith | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 2. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | 4/5 |
| 3. Prof I.O.G. Moche | x | √ | √ | x | √ | 3/5 |
| 4. Prof S Mosoetsa | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 4/5 |
| 5. Dr R.L. Martin | √ | x | x | √ | x | 2/5 |
| 6. Mr L.B. Kraziya | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 7. Prof N.N. Feza | √ | x | √ | x | √ | 3/5 |
| 8. Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele | x | x | √ | √ | √ | 3/5 |
| 9. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 10. Ms S.F. Mudau | - | - | - | √ | √ | 2/2 |

Legend:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member

Key outputs of the Finance Committee

During the reporting period, FinCom delivered the following key outputs:

- ▶ Finance Committee 2024 Work Plan
- ▶ Finance Committee Terms of Reference
- ▶ University of Venda Group Draft 2023 Annual Financial Statements (unaudited)
- ▶ 2024 Operational and Capital Budget
- ▶ Finance Strategic Plan

Additional matters considered:

- ▶ Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Reports
- ▶ 2024 Payment Schedule
- ▶ External Audit Management Letter
- ▶ Audit Management Action Plan
- ▶ Reports from the Investment Committee
- ▶ UIGC Financial Reports
- ▶ Land Reports
- ▶ Infrastructure Project Progress Report
- ▶ Report on Litigation Cases



Human Resources Committee

Chairperson: Mr B P Thompson



The Human Resources Committee (HRC) plays a critical advisory and oversight role in supporting the University Council on all matters related to human capital management. It ensures that the University's human resources policies and practices comply with statutory requirements and align with the institution's long-term strategic objectives. The committee is responsible for promoting sound institutional governance in key areas such as strategic workforce planning, performance management, talent development, and succession planning, each essential for ensuring operational continuity and institutional excellence.

In addition, the HRC upholds fair, competitive, and sustainable remuneration practices that support staff retention, motivation, and transformation.

During the 2024 reporting year, the HRC convened four ordinary meetings, as reflected in **Table 8**. These sessions focused on advancing the University's HR strategy, strengthening institutional capacity, and providing governance assurance on matters relating to employee performance, development, and compliance.

Table 8: HRC Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 07/03/2024 | 13/05/2024 | 07/08/2024 | 18/10/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Mr B.P. Thompson | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 2. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 3. Dr J. M. Mokoelle | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 4. Mr M.N. Mangena | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 5. Mr S.B. Mampeule | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 6. Prof S. Mosoetsa | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 7. Dr N.R. Mbhele | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 8. Mr K.E. Mabelebele | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 9. Dr R.L. Martin | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 10. Mr L.B. Kraziya | √ | √ | x | √ | 3/4 |
| 11. Prof N.N. Feza | √ | √ | √ | x | 3/4 |
| 12. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 13. Mr A. Maphiswana | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 14. Mr J.A.M. Mogashoa | x | √ | √ | √ | 3/4 |

| NAME | 07/03/2024 | 13/05/2024 | 07/08/2024 | 18/10/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 15. Mr N.D. Tshithavhane | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 16. Dr L.M.P. Mulaudzi | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |

Legend:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member

Key Outputs of the Human Resources Committee

In 2024, the HRC advanced its mandate to strengthen strategic human capital development and governance. Key outputs included the approval and implementation of several human resources policies and initiatives, including:

- ▶ 2024 HRC Work Plan
- ▶ Policy on Termination of Service
- ▶ Policy on Retirement Due to ill health
- ▶ Policy on Recognition of Long Service and Improved Qualification
- ▶ Establishment of the Transformation Office
- ▶ Policy on Substance Abuse
- ▶ Process flow for the renewal of the contract for the Vice-Chancellor and Principal
- ▶ Proposed UNIVEN 2023 Salary Scales

HRC also provided oversight and guidance on several critical matters, including:

- ▶ Human Resources Department Progress Reports
- ▶ Risk Register Reports
- ▶ Transformation and Employment Equity
- ▶ Talent Management and Succession Planning
- ▶ Institutional Performance Management Report for 2023 Performance Cycle
- ▶ Organisational Culture Survey
- ▶ Vital Statistics Report
- ▶ Transformation Report
- ▶ Labour Relations Report
- ▶ Organisational Development Report
- ▶ Occupational Health and Safety Report
- ▶ Progress Report on Talent Management and Succession Planning

Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee

Chairperson: Mr K E Mabelebele



The Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee (FPIC) provides strategic oversight and guidance on the planning, procurement, and implementation of infrastructure and facilities projects. Its mandate is to ensure that all developments align with institutional priorities and promote the efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable use of resources.

Table 9: FPIC Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 30/05/2024 | 15/08/2024 | 22/10/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Mr K.E. Mabelebele | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 2. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 3. Dr S. E. Smith | √ | x | √ | 2/3 |
| 4. Dr N.R. Mbhele | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 5. Dr R.L. Martin | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 6. Mr L.B. Kraziya | x | x | √ | 1/3 |
| 7. Prof N.N. Feza | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 8. Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele | x | x | √ | 1/3 |
| 9. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 10. Mr N. Eve (External Expert) | √ | - | - | 1/1 |
| 11. Mr N.A. Khangale (External Expert) | √ | √ | √ | 3/3 |
| 12. Mr T. Arran (External Expert) | - | - | √ | 1/1 |

Legend:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member



Key Outputs of the Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee

- ▶ FPIC Terms of Reference
- ▶ UNIVEN Spatial Development Plan
- ▶ UNIVEN Sustainability and Energy Plan

FPIC also considered the following matters:

- ▶ Land Report
- ▶ Infrastructure Project Board Report
- ▶ Progress on the Punda Maria Road Project
- ▶ Progress on the Main Administration Building Project
- ▶ Maintenance Project Board Report
- ▶ Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant Project Status Report
- ▶ Purchase of a property in Pretoria for the Advancement Unit
- ▶ Nursing Simulation Building Project
- ▶ Internal Audit Report – Infrastructure and Capital Projects Management
- ▶ Bid Adjudication Committee (BAC) Approved Projects

Student Affairs Committee

Chairperson: Dr RN Mbhele



The Student Affairs Committee (SAC) reports directly to the Council on matters related to student governance. It oversees the development and review of policies, rules, and regulations governing student affairs, including student residences and their management. Importantly, the committee is also responsible for enhancing students' quality of life through the implementation of social, educational, religious, cultural, health, and sporting programmes. In the year under review, the SAC held seven meetings.

Table 10: SAC Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 01/03/2024 | 09/05/2024 | 02/08/2024 | 28/08/2024 | 17/10/2024 | 13/11/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr N.R. Mbhele | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 2. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | x | 4/6 |
| 3. Prof E. Lekalakala-Mokgele | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/6 |
| 4. Mr L.B. Kraziya | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | x | 4/6 |
| 5. Prof N.N. Feza | x | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | 4/6 |
| 6. Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase | x | √ | x | x | √ | √ | 3/6 |
| 7. Ms A.S. Rambuda | x | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | 4/6 |
| 8. Mr T. Telite | x | √ | √ | √ | √ | x | 4/6 |
| 9. Dr A.M. Mashilo | - | X | √ | √ | x | √ | 3/5 |
| 10. Prof T.S. Mashau | x | X | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/6 |
| 11. Mr B. Mafumo | x | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 4/6 |
| 12. Mr V. Rakheila | x | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 4/6 |
| 13. Mr J. Ndaka | - | √ | √ | x | x | √ | 3/5 |
| 14. Mr M. Nemahunguni | - | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 15. Prof. B. Bantwini | x | X | - | - | - | - | 2/2 |
| 16. Prof T. Runhare | - | - | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4/4 |
| 17. Prof M.T. Mulaudzi | √ | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 5/6 |
| 18. Prof M. Kanyane | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |
| 19. Prof N. Potgieter | √ | X | √ | x | √ | √ | 4/6 |
| 20. Mr R. Mulaudzi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |

| NAME | 01/03/2024 | 09/05/2024 | 02/08/2024 | 28/08/2024 | 17/10/2024 | 13/11/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 21. Mrs M.T. Mulaudzi | √ | √ | √ | x | x | √ | 4/6 |
| 22. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6/6 |

Legend:

√ = Attended

x = Did not attend

- = Not yet a member or no longer a member

Key Outputs of the Student Affairs Committee included:

- ▶ 2024 SAC Work Plan
- ▶ 2023/24 SRC Programme of Action (PoA)
- ▶ Approval of the 2025 SAC Work Plan
- ▶ SAC Terms of Reference

Other matters that were also dealt with by the SAC are the following:

- ▶ Report on Appeal cases
- ▶ Reports on Student Affairs
- ▶ Reports on Legal Services
- ▶ Reports on the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL)
- ▶ Reports on Marketing, Branding and Communication
- ▶ Reports on Protection Services
- ▶ Reports on International Relations and Partnerships (IRP)
- ▶ Reports on Information Communication Technology (ICT)
- ▶ Reports on Revenue and Financial Aid
- ▶ Mechanisms to minimise irregularities during examinations
- ▶ Establishment of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Office
- ▶ Report on safety and security as emerging strategic risks

Senate

The Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, advises the Council on all academic matters and oversees the University's academic activities. Its composition is in accordance with Section 35(1) of the University Statute.

Meetings held during the year under review

During the reporting period, the Senate convened six meetings, including four ordinary and two special, as detailed below:

- ▶ 13 March 2024 (Ordinary)
- ▶ 28 May 2024 (Ordinary)
- ▶ 26 August 2024 (Ordinary)
- ▶ 25 October 2024 (Ordinary)
- ▶ 08 November 2024 (Special)
- ▶ 03 December 2024 (Special)

Statement on Conflict Management and Code of Conduct

The University has a comprehensive Grievance Procedure Manual in place to manage and resolve conflicts among staff members. In addition, the Council-approved Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics guide ethical behaviour and promote constructive working relationships across the institution.

Statement on Worker and Student Participation (Co-operative Governance)

The University engages its staff through representative structures spanning academic, administrative, and service categories. Student representation is facilitated through the Student Representative Council (SRC) Cabinet, which maintains regular interaction with the University Management. The SRC holds seats on the University Council, the Student Affairs Committee, and various academic and administrative bodies. In addition, students participate in Senate through the Chairs of Faculty Councils, contribute to the Institutional Forum, and engage in regular and special meetings with Executive Management.

Workers are actively involved in both statutory and non-statutory committees, including the Institutional Forum, Senate, Council, and several Council subcommittees, through their designated representatives. Overall, the participation of students and workers in University affairs during 2024 was satisfactory.

In conclusion, I am confident that the Council and its committees effectively fulfilled their mandated responsibilities. These committees comprised members with the requisite skills and expertise to make informed decisions and chaired by individuals suitably qualified to lead their respective portfolios.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Executive Committee of Council, Committee Chairs, Council Members, Executive Management, Senior Management, and staff for their dedication and contributions to a successful 2024.



MR S B MAMPEULE

CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL



Council Statement on Sustainability

In 2024, UNIVEN upheld its commitment to financial sustainability through effective co-governance between management and students. The Council prioritised prudent financial management to ensure the institution's financial health across all operations. This approach safeguarded critical infrastructure, academic projects, and the maintenance of existing assets, in line with UNIVEN's strategic objectives. The Council remains committed to fostering a financially sustainable environment that supports the University's long-term goals.

UNIVEN also reinforced its commitment to sustainability through strategic realignment of portfolios and strengthened governance. Recognising the growing importance of third-stream income, management prioritised initiatives to diversify revenue sources beyond government subsidies and tuition fees—an essential step towards achieving long-term financial resilience.

The Council affirms that it diligently exercised its oversight and governance responsibilities. This is evident from the systems it put in place to support implementation of the 2024 Annual Performance Plan and to ensure that the key objectives were achieved.

A full account of UNIVEN's performance against these objectives is presented in the Vice-Chancellor's Performance Report and in the subsequent sections of this report. The Council appreciates the dedication shown by all stakeholders in executing the University's Strategic Plan. It is through this focused commitment that the University remains on track to achieve its long-term goals.

All Council committees were constituted in accordance with the relevant national legislation and effectively fulfilled their delegated responsibilities. This statement outlines the Council's role in discharging its governance duties for the 2024 reporting period.

UNIVEN continues to face challenges in providing adequate infrastructure for its growing student population—a concern shared by many higher education institutions across the country. In response, the University established a Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee, operating under approved terms of reference, to provide oversight of infrastructure projects.

Significant progress has been made, including the construction of the new Faculty of Health Sciences building, which strengthens campus capacity. Encouragingly, the University has received positive interest from both the private sector and government to support its infrastructure development—a collaboration that is vital to long-term sustainability.

The Council remains committed to working with all stakeholders to enhance UNIVEN's infrastructure, thereby supporting its mission to provide quality education and promote academic excellence.

In 2024, UNIVEN maintained strong financial oversight across its main income streams: government subsidies, student fees, and third-stream income. The Consolidated Financial Statement of Activities, prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, provides clear recognition of revenue earned and expenses incurred and is included in this report.

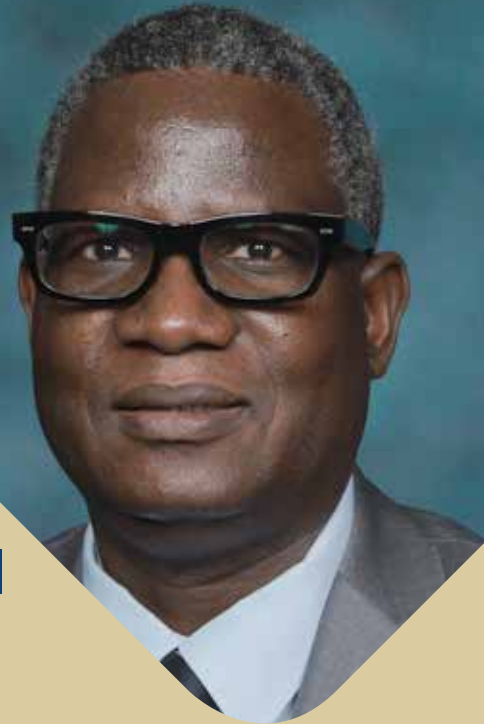
The Council is confident that these funds have been effectively utilised in the best interests of the University, in support of its strategic objectives and long-term sustainability.



MR S B MAMPEULE

CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

Report of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal



On behalf of the UNIVEN Council, I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report, marking the fourth year of implementing our 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the University's financial and non-financial performance, aligned with the objectives and performance targets outlined in the Council-approved 2024 Annual Performance Plan (APP). It highlights significant achievements across various domains, including academic excellence, research advancements, and community engagement initiatives. Notably, it underscores the University's commitment to innovative administrative structures, encompassing personnel and systems founded on principles of good corporate governance and operational efficiency.

In 2024, UNIVEN made significant strides in strengthening its administrative and governance frameworks, aligning with its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. These advancements reflect the University's dedication to excellence, equity, and community engagement.

The University remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance, which are fundamental to managing scarce public resources. The initiatives outlined below represent the main pillars of the University's corporate good governance arrangements implemented by management during the reporting period.

Strategic Vision and Risk Management: Vision 2040

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal is entrusted with providing strategic policy direction, ensuring alignment with national priorities, and upholding effective governance and risk management practices. This mandate is realised through the identification, formulation, and implementation of strategic initiatives that reflect both institutional priorities and national objectives, including the development and maintenance of sound corporate governance systems.

During the reporting period, UNIVEN management finalised the conceptual framework for its long-term strategy, Vision 2040. This strategy is anchored in the University's Integrated Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Biodiversity Plan (IEIBP), a transformative roadmap that seeks to redefine the institution's role within the higher education

landscape. The IEIBP reflects UNIVEN's commitment to the holistic integration of entrepreneurship, innovation, and biodiversity conservation, positioning the University at the forefront of academic institutions driving positive societal change. Finalisation of Vision 2040 is expected during the 2025 academic year, with Council approval for implementation scheduled for the 2026 reporting period.

Enhancing Internal Governance through Maturity Assessment Implementation

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal upholds a strong commitment to exemplary corporate governance and effective institutional risk management. A key initiative during the reporting period was the implementation of recommendations from the Institutional Governance Maturity Assessment. This assessment serves as a strategic tool to evaluate and strengthen the University's governance practices, ensuring alignment with best practices in quality assurance and institutional effectiveness.



Key governance enhancements during the period under review included the following:

- ▶ **Renaming of the Governance and Compliance Unit:** Effective January 2024, the unit was restructured and renamed “Governance, Ethics and Compliance” to reflect an expanded mandate and emphasise the University's commitment to ethical standards and compliance. The unit now reports directly to the University Registrar, supporting a more streamlined and accountable governance framework.
- ▶ **Reorganisation of the Risk Management Function:** The Directorate of Internal Audit and Risk underwent a strategic reorganisation to strengthen risk management processes. The Risk Management function now reports directly to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, with functional oversight by the Directorate of Strategy, Monitoring, and Evaluation. This restructuring is designed to enhance enterprise-wide risk operations, improve reporting mechanisms, and facilitate informed decision-making across the institution.

Institutionalisation of Risk Management Culture

During the reporting period, the University adopted a risk-based culture as the foundation of its organisational risk management strategy. This approach integrates shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape how the institution perceives, responds to, and manages risk at all levels.

The core elements of this culture include a collective mindset toward potential threats and opportunities, supported by strong risk awareness and effective communication. These components ensure that all stakeholders—academic, administrative, and support staff—clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in managing institutional risk.

Decision-making processes within management were pivotal during this period, guiding the identification, assessment, and mitigation of risks. A key emphasis was placed on accountability and responsibility, reinforcing ownership and proactive engagement with risk management practices.

Risk management processes were institutionalised through the implementation of a Council-approved institutional risk register. Strategic risks were allocated to designated risk owners—members of the Executive and Senior Management—thereby ensuring direct accountability. Furthermore, the appointment of compliance and risk champions across various directorates and faculties strengthened the University’s capacity to monitor, report, and respond to risks in a decentralised yet coordinated manner.

The adoption of a robust risk culture yielded several positive outcomes during the period under review:

- ▶ **Improved Risk Identification:** The institutional environment encouraged the early detection and reporting of risks. Staff were empowered to raise concerns without fear of reprisal, resulting in fewer operational errors and improved responsiveness.
- ▶ **Enhanced Risk Assessment:** Prioritising risk culture improved the University’s ability to assess the likelihood and potential impact of risks. This enabled more informed, data-driven decision-making across academic and administrative functions.
- ▶ **Effective Risk Mitigation:** A mature risk culture enabled the proactive development and implementation of mitigation strategies. This significantly reduced the impact of potential risks and enhanced institutional preparedness.
- ▶ **Organisational Resilience:** A deeply embedded risk culture strengthened the University’s ability to respond swiftly to disruptions, recover from setbacks, and adapt effectively to changing internal and external environments.

These outcomes reflect the institution’s strategic focus on cultivating a risk-aware environment that supports good governance, accountability, and continuous improvement. To ensure institution-wide commitment to a risk management culture, structured processes have been implemented, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Fraud and Corruption

The University has an effective system for fraud risk management, including a comprehensive framework, strategy, whistle-blowing policies, and an annual fraud prevention and detection plan.

Impact of Whistle-blowing Campaigns

During the period under review, a total of nine unique allegations were reported via the Deloitte whistle-blowing hotline. Of these, five allegations were investigated and concluded, resulting in the dismissal of staff members. The remaining four allegations are still under investigation. The turnaround time for feedback is typically within three months. However, delays can occur when allegations are complex and require involvement from external law enforcement or oversight bodies, such as the South African Police Service, the Special Investigation Unit, or the Office of the Public Protector.

The Internal Audit Unit and the Audit and Risk Committee provide independent assurance on the University’s risk management processes and offer guidance on the effectiveness of risk controls and mitigation initiatives. Strategic, operational, and functional risk profiles were finalised for the reporting period, and risk mitigation efforts were monitored quarterly by the Risk Management Committee under an independent chairperson.

Ethics and Compliance: Strengthening Institutional Integrity

The Governance, Ethics, and Compliance Unit, which currently reports directly to the Registrar, plays a pivotal role in promoting transparency and accountability across the institution.

▶ Minimising Conflicts of Interest

To uphold integrity in decision-making, UNIVEN mandated financial disclosures from the Executive Management Committee (EMC), the Senior Management Committee (SMC), and non-SMC employees. This initiative ensures that potential conflicts of interest are identified and addressed proactively, particularly within governance oversight structures.

▶ Promoting an Ethical Culture

The University implemented an Ethical Culture Policy to promote high standards of ethical behaviour among staff. Awareness sessions on the Code of Conduct were conducted, reinforcing the institution's values and expectations. These efforts aim to cultivate a culture of integrity and ethical responsibility throughout the University community.

Through these measures, UNIVEN demonstrates its dedication to embedding ethical principles in its operational framework and ensuring that governance practices reflect the highest standards of conduct.

Internal Audit Activities and Effectiveness in 2024

UNIVEN's Internal Audit function, which reports functionally to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), continued to play a pivotal role in enhancing governance, risk management, and internal control processes during the 2024 financial year.

Audit Planning and Execution

The ARC reviewed and approved the Three-Year Rolling Plan and the 2025 Internal Audit Operational Plan to ensure alignment with the University's strategic objectives and risk profile. The Internal Audit adopted a risk-based approach, prioritising areas of significant institutional risk. Key activities included:

- ▶ **Risk-Based Audits:** Audits focused on high-risk areas to evaluate the effectiveness of internal controls and compliance with applicable policies and procedures.
- ▶ **Follow-Up on Recommendations:** The Internal Audit conducted follow-up reviews on previous audit recommendations to ensure effective implementation and value realisation.
- ▶ **Combined Assurance:** Evaluations were conducted to assess the adequacy of combined assurance efforts and ensure comprehensive risk coverage across the institution.

The ARC confirmed that the Internal Audit function operated effectively, addressed key risks, and provided meaningful assurance on the adequacy of internal controls. Through ARC processes, management affirmed that internal control systems were appropriate and effective during the reporting period.

These efforts reflect the University's ongoing commitment to robust governance and continuous improvement in internal control practices.

Community Engagement Initiatives

In 2024, UNIVEN advanced its commitment to societal impact through a series of transformative community engagement initiatives. These efforts, aligned with the University's Strategic Plan 2021–2025, were coordinated by the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation.

Three transformative projects were reviewed for impact during the reporting period:

- (1) Phasing out Accounting at the FET level in High Schools



(2) Promoting Ubuntu Philosophy - a community-based participatory research educational intervention for selected rural villages in Limpopo Province

(3) Skills for the Future Programme.

These initiatives underscore UNIVEN's dedication to building sustainable community relationships, promoting ethical values, and preparing learners for future challenges. By integrating community engagement with research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, the University aims to drive operational excellence and contribute meaningfully to societal development.

Evolving Academic Programmes at UNIVEN in Response to Societal Needs

UNIVEN has strategically realigned its academic programmes to address South Africa's high youth unemployment rate, particularly among individuals aged 15 to 24. This initiative reflects the University's commitment to its motto, "Creating Future Leaders," by ensuring its offerings are both locally relevant and globally competitive. Curricula have been revised to focus on disciplines that directly support economic development and job creation.

These academic transformations form part of UNIVEN's broader strategic vision to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible and economically productive. By aligning its programmes with national priorities and global trends, the University aims to enhance graduate employability and contribute meaningfully to societal advancement. UNIVEN remains committed to the continuous evaluation and adaptation of its academic offerings to ensure responsiveness to the evolving needs of society and the economy.

Entrepreneurship Ethos

UNIVEN is strengthening its focus on entrepreneurship within the curriculum. Embedding entrepreneurial skills prepares students for the job market while fostering innovation and contributing to economic growth.

Graduate employability surveys conducted in May and September 2024 showed a low number of self-employed graduates, highlighting the need to further integrate entrepreneurship across academic programmes. Enhancing these skills will better equip students to create business opportunities and contribute to economic development after graduation.

Skills Development and Employability

UNIVEN is strategically enhancing its academic programmes to meet evolving labour market demands. Through active collaboration with industry stakeholders, alumni, and partners, the University ensures its curricula develop critical competencies, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy, that drive graduate employability.

Graduate employability surveys from May and September 2024 provided crucial data to assess and refine programme effectiveness. The positive indication of timely graduate employment reinforces the University's commitment to continuously aligning academic offerings with market needs and economic priorities.

Research, Innovation, and Curriculum Reform

UNIVEN is advancing research-led teaching to promote innovation and critical problem-solving among students. Through targeted curriculum reforms, the University prioritises aligning programmes with societal and economic needs by integrating applied research and contemporary issues into course content. This approach ensures graduates are equipped to address real-world challenges effectively.

African Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems Curriculum

Aligned with its vision and mission, UNIVEN offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that respond to regional development priorities. The Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (BIKS) programme demonstrates this commitment, recognising Indigenous Knowledge as vital to local agriculture, healthcare, natural resource management, and community life. Embedded in culture and social institutions, this tacit knowledge supports sustainable problem-solving, particularly in vulnerable communities.



Embracing the World of AI as a Smart Working Tool

During the reporting period, University leadership decisively accelerated the automation and modernisation of operations, positioning UNIVEN at the forefront of digital transformation in higher education. This drive led to significant advancements in ICT infrastructure and services. Among the major projects undertaken was the comprehensive ICT Infrastructure Upgrade Project, which included the following key developments:

- ▶ **Campus-Wide Wi-Fi:** The institution successfully implemented a robust campus-wide Wi-Fi network, ensuring seamless connectivity for all students, faculty, and staff.
- ▶ **Smart Lecture Halls:** Lecture halls were upgraded with smart technology to enhance the learning experience through interactive and advanced teaching tools.

- ▶ **Computer Labs Upgrade:** The University modernised its computer labs with the latest hardware and software to support cutting-edge research and learning.
- ▶ **Network Devices Upgrade:** New network devices were installed to improve infrastructure performance and reliability.

In a groundbreaking move, the University migrated all critical services to the cloud, including its ERP system. This move makes UNIVEN the first university in Africa, and the second globally, to migrate an Oracle-based ERP system to Microsoft Azure. This shift ensures greater scalability, security, and operational efficiency.

Recognising the importance of cybersecurity, the University made substantial investments to strengthen its ICT security framework in response to emerging cyber threats. Notably, UNIVEN launched AI-driven initiatives, including the implementation of Microsoft Security Copilot—becoming the first university in Africa to adopt this innovation.

These advancements reflect UNIVEN's commitment to providing a state-of-the-art educational environment and maintaining its position as a leader in ICT innovation in higher education.

Enhancing Financial Systems


The contracts register was successfully migrated to the SABEeX Delivery Management System during the reporting period. New contracts are now captured in the system once all parties have signed. The upload of historical contracts from Excel spreadsheets, along with supporting documentation, into the automated register was completed.

The RealPay platform, which enables the University to create monthly DebiCheck transactions for student debt repayments, is ready for implementation. Staff have been trained on the system. This automation will ensure valid referencing of student payments and enable prompt allocation to student accounts, thereby reducing the risk of misallocated funds.

The Cash Management Application (CMA) project—designed to support treasury management and reporting—underwent testing during the period under review. It was launched internally to gather user feedback and confirm that the application meets user requirements through appropriate dashboards and reporting functionality. The full launch is planned for the next reporting cycle.

The University also introduced an additional payment platform (Flywire) for international students. This partnership enables the transfer of foreign currency payments at competitive exchange rates via multiple payment platforms, making it easier for international students to settle their fees and related costs.

The Invoice Management Automation (IMA) project aims to automate the process of generating sundry invoices. The system will automatically create, issue, and process the necessary transactional journals to complete the accounting cycle. It is designed to generate both recurring invoices, such as rental and sundry debtors invoices, and once-off invoices for grants or other payment requests. The system has been developed in partnership with Adapt IT.



PROF NB NTHAMBELENI

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL

Performance Assessment Report



This performance assessment report responds to the UNIVEN's commitment to provide an annual analysis and account of progress made towards implementing the 2024 Annual Performance Plan (APP) and achieving its associated targets. It outlines the extent to which the University's predetermined objectives, as well as commitments made by Council, have been achieved during the period under review. The report is directly linked to the key performance indicators and targets stated in the APP 2024.

In accordance with the *Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions*, published under the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, the University is statutorily required to prepare and submit a Council-approved APP aligned with its strategic plan and budget. The regulations further require the University to prepare and submit an Annual Report detailing its actual achievements against the targets set for the preceding financial year.

The University's 2024 Performance Assessment Report is framed within the context of the APP 2024, which comprises a total of 43 key performance measures/indicators spread across 15 strategic objectives and aligned with four strategic thrusts.

Table 11: Annual Performance Plan 2024 Framework

| ST1: Student-centeredness and engaged scholarship | ST2: Entrepreneurial university | ST3: Governance for outstanding scholarship | ST4: Linkages, partnership, and internationalisation |
|---|---|---|---|
| SO1: To enhance student well-being and success. | SO6: To develop an entrepreneurial culture. | SO10: To promote effective institutional governance and management systems. | SO15: To strengthen the University's local, regional, and international profile and visibility. |
| SO2: To enhance the curriculum and improve graduateness. | SO7: To enhance financial sustainability. | SO11: To enhance the corporate identity of UNIVEN. | |
| SO3: To strengthen the engagement of students, staff, and community stakeholders. | SO8: To be an anchor institution for effective integrated local and regional development. | SO12: To improve governance of institutional information systems. | |
| SO4: To enhance teaching and learning support. | SO9: To develop Enterprise. | SO13: To strengthen systems and processes for infrastructure development and maintenance. | |
| SO5: To enhance research outputs for innovation and impact. | | SO14: To enhance security on and around campus, and in off-campus residences. | |

The tables and figures below provide a summary of overall performance against the annual performance targets as set in the 2024 APP (for both the predetermined objectives and Ministerial-approved enrolment targets).



ACTUAL PERFORMANCE AGAINST PREDETERMINED OBJECTIVES

This section provides a detailed presentation and analysis of performance information against the predetermined objectives of the University during the period under review. It includes actual performance against targets set out in the APP 2024.

Table 12: Performance Analysis

| Strategic Thrusts | Strategic Objectives | Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) | Annual Targets | Progress status against targets | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | | Not achieved | Achieved | % Achieved |
| ST1 | Student-centeredness and engaged scholarship | 18 | 18 | 6 | 12 | 67% |
| ST2 | Entrepreneurial university | 9 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 89% |
| ST3 | Governance for outstanding scholarship | 9 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 100% |
| ST4 | Linkages, partnerships, and internationalisation | 7 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 100% |
| Overall | | 43 | 43 | 7 | 36 | 84% |

Figure 1: Overall Achievements Per Strategic Thrust

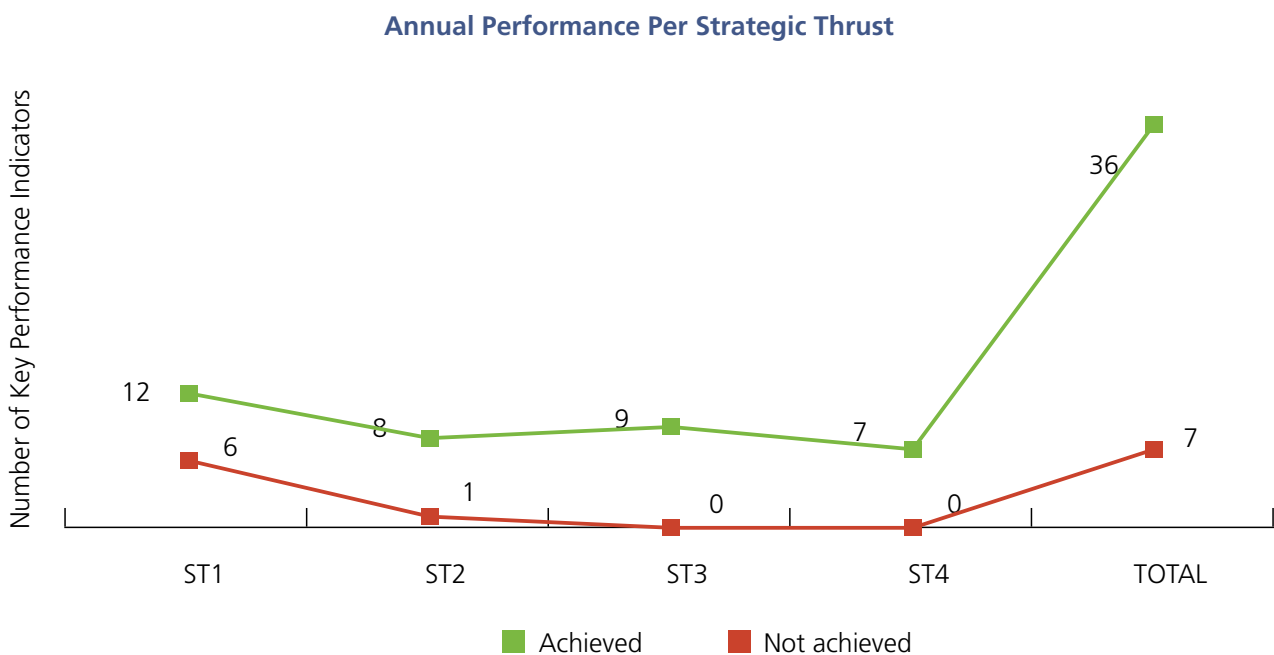
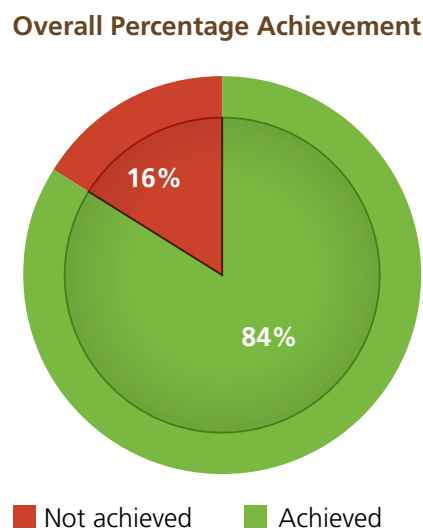


Table 12 and Figure 1 above present the performance of various strategic thrusts over the review period. For Strategic Thrust 1, there were eighteen annual targets set, of which twelve were achieved while six were not. Strategic Thrust 2 had nine annual performance targets, with eight successfully achieved. Similarly, all nine targets for Strategic Thrust 3 were met. Lastly, Strategic Thrust 4 had seven performance targets, and all were successfully achieved.

The recorded annual performance shows that the highest-performing strategic thrusts were governance for outstanding scholarship and linkages, partnerships, and internationalisation. The least performing strategic thrust for the year under review is student-centeredness and engaged scholarship, with a recorded performance of 67%. The overall performance across all strategic thrusts for the year is reported at 84%, with 36 key performance targets being achieved (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Overall Percentage Achievement



Detailed Performance Against Annual Targets

This section provides a detailed presentation and analysis of performance information for the University during the period under review, including actual performance against the targets set out in the APP 2024 and reasons for any underachievement. It also outlines how the University intends to address the shortcomings in areas where targets were not achieved.

Strategic Thrust 1: Student-centeredness and engaged scholarship.

This strategic thrust is aimed at promoting excellence in teaching and learning through a variety of academic programmes, enhanced learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic support strategies designed to address the diverse learning needs, interests, and aspirations of both individual and groups of students.

Table 13 below provides a detailed account of performance under the thrust on student-centeredness and engaged scholarship.

Table 13: Student-Centeredness and Engaged Scholarship

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO1 | To enhance student well-being and success | 1.1 | Number of interventions and services focused on improving student well-being and experience | 40 | 41 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis workshops • Peer support programme • Sanitary pads drive • Student scholarships • Student referral for psychosocial support • Research supervision course • Postgraduate research workshops (3) • Student disability support programme • Language policy • Mental health programme • Midlands State University exchange programme • SANBI career session • Induction for postgraduate students • E-learning support services • Mentorship and tutoring programme • Gender-based violence awareness campaigns • Orientation programme for First-Time Entering (FTEN) students • SACSSP visit to UNIVEN • Workplace preparatory workshop • Academic writing workshop • Additional tutorials and quizzes • First Things First awareness campaign • SRC induction on security awareness • Whistle-blowing security awareness campaign • Sports programmes • Second-semester learning guides on Moodle • Appointment of part-time lecturer in FSEA • Atlas TI training postgraduate register • Diabetes Mellitus campaign • Field practical – Rand Water (Vereeniging) • Geological field mapping • Geo-talk industry intervention • MoU between students and supervisors |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|---|
| SO1 | To enhance student well-being and success | 1.1 | Number of interventions and services focused on improving student well-being and experience | | 41 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHE conquers • SPSS training • Teaching and learning workshop for staff • Training on National Forest Act (2) • UNIVEN Debate Fraternity |
| | | 1.2 | Student Success Rate | 85% | 80% | <p>Inadequate ongoing academic support, analysis of student performance in identified study areas, and intervention strategies for struggling students partly contribute to the low student success rate.</p> <p>The current performance also shows an improvement of 4% from the previous year.</p> <p>As explained earlier, various forms of student-targeted support interventions have contributed to improved performance but not to the desired extent.</p> |
| | | 1.3 | Number of postgraduates to master's graduates | 390 | 455 | The University produced more honours graduates than anticipated due to targeted capacity development initiatives, enhanced supervisory capacity, and ongoing student support systems. |
| | | 1.4 | Number of master's graduates | 175 | 168 | <p>The lower performance is attributed to the socio-economic challenges and lack of funding for student support.</p> <p>However, the University continues to hone its various research support interventions to improve the N+ completion rate for master's degrees, thereby increasing the number of graduates.</p> |
| | | 1.5 | Number of doctoral graduates | 50 | 72 | The University produced more doctoral graduates than anticipated as a direct consequence of effective UCDG-aligned capacity development initiatives and increased supervisory capacity, including the use of special category academics (Adjunct/Emeritus/Professors). |
| | | 1.6 | Graduation rate | 22% | 20.9% | <p>The performance fell below the target by a slight margin of 1.1%.</p> <p>However, management is working towards targeted interventions to address these shortcomings.</p> |
| | | 1.7 | Throughput rate | 60% | 44.1% | The target is underachieved due to student repetitions and dropouts, which affect the rate at which a given cohort completes a qualification within the stipulated timeframe. |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|---|
| SO2 | To enhance the curriculum and improve graduateness. | 2.1 | Number of programmes reviewed, and recommendations implemented | 18 | 24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Commerce in Industrial Psychology • Bachelor of Education Honours in Early Childhood • Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology • Bachelor of Arts in History • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Anthropology • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Applied Anthropology • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Applied Linguistics • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Gender Studies • Bachelor of Arts Honours: History • Bachelor of Arts Honours: International Relations • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Political Science • Bachelor of Arts: Youth Development • Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems • Bachelor of Arts Honours Archaeology • Bachelor of Arts: Language Practice • Bachelor of Administration • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Criminal Justice • Bachelor of Commerce in Business Information Systems • Bachelor of Human Resource Management • Master of Public Management • Bachelor of Arts Honours: Rural Development Programme • Bachelor of Science: Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering • Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology • Bachelor of Science in Biokinetics |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO3 | To strengthen the engagement of students, staff, and community stakeholders. | 3.1 | Number of formalised collaborations with communities, industries, and other stakeholders | 8 | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoU with Consumer Goods and Services Ombud Student Industrial Training - Westfalia Fruit Estate MoU with Centre for Emerging Researchers MoU with Ditsong Museums MoU with Limpopo Home Cinema MoU with Midlands State University and NUL MoU with National School of Government MoU with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development Non-Disclosure Agreement with Mukapuza SLA with the University of the Free State |
| | | 3.2 | Number of community engagement projects reviewed for impact | 3 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors affecting the phasing out of accounting as a subject area at the FET level in Limpopo Province. The Promotion of Ubuntu: A community-based participatory research educational intervention for selected rural villages in Limpopo Province The Skills for the Future Programme (SFFP) |
| SO4 | To enhance teaching and learning support | 4.1 | Percentage of first-time entering undergraduate students provided with academic support to improve their success rate | 35% | 67.4% | <p>More training opportunities were made available to support the FTE UG since there are risks associated with FTE students entering the higher learning environment space for the first time.</p> <p>A total of 2,411 out of 3,579 FTEN students received tutoring, which translates to 67.4%.</p> |
| | | 4.2 | Percentage of undergraduate students with disabilities provided with academic support | 100% | 100% | Target achieved |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO5 | To enhance research outputs for innovation and impact | 5.1 | Number of patents filed | 1 | 1 | Smart irrigation monitoring and control system for photovoltaic water pumping |
| | | 5.2 | Number of NRF-rated researchers | 40 | 41 | Target achieved |
| | | 5.3 | Percentage of academic staff with doctoral degrees who produce at least 1.25 units per annum | 45% | 13.75 % | Fewer publication units were produced than anticipated. Management continues to strengthen staff research capacity through various research workshops |
| | | 5.4 | Percentage of research professors that are self-funded | 45% | 0% | Among the three existing research professors, only two have successfully mobilised external funding. However, the total amount of funding or research grants received by each of the two professors did not meet the prescribed threshold or fit the definition ¹ of the indicator. |
| | | 5.5 | Number of post-doctoral fellows appointed | 10 | 22 | A total of 18 postdocs met the minimum requirements for renewal of their fellowships. Four new post-doctoral appointments were made. |
| | | 5.6 | Number of research thrusts/priorities/niches defined and established | 2 | 2 | Additional priority areas were identified by management to support the realisation of the niche areas identified in line with the strategic intent of the University. |

Strategic Thrust 2: Entrepreneurial University

This strategic thrust strives to position UNIVEN as an entrepreneurial service hub and to establish links that will increase both its local and regional economic development impact. This will be achieved by fostering an entrepreneurial culture, strengthening the University's involvement in local and regional development, and promoting enterprise development. The University further intends to reduce its reliance on state subsidies for financial sustainability by exploring other viable commercial options with the potential to generate extra income.

Table 14 below provides a detailed account of performance under this strategic thrust.

¹ Research professors who annually, during a five-year term of employment (starting from their second year), mobilise external research, innovation, and/or commercialisation funding that at least equals or exceeds their annual total cost to the company. The indicator tracks those mobilising external funding that covers their research activities, including annual remuneration and related benefits.

Table 14: Entrepreneurial University

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO6 | To develop an entrepreneurial culture | 6.1 | Number of entrepreneurial initiatives to strengthen the capacities of staff | 16 | 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis workshop • Intellectual property training • Postgraduate Certificate in Entrepreneurial Leadership for Academics • Digital Entrepreneurship Skills Development Workshop • Incorporating entrepreneurship in the curriculum • Vhembe Agricultural Information Day • Marula Festival in Phalaborwa • Entrepreneur webinar • Workshop for sustainable entrepreneurship • School of Law entrepreneurship training • Train the Trainer Educators Entrepreneurship • 2024 Global Enterprise Experience • Department of Basic Education's E3 Programme • Commercialisation Training Workshop • FOREST 21 Workshop • UCfERI Door-to-Door marketing campaign • Youth African Entrepreneurship Institute (YAEI) event programme |
| | | 6.2 | Number of staff engaged in entrepreneurial activities | 26 | 606 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis workshop • Intellectual property training • Post-graduate certificate in Entrepreneurial Leadership for Academic • Digital Entrepreneurship Skills Development Workshop • Incorporating Entrepreneurship in the Curriculum • Vhembe Agricultural Information Day • Marula Festival-Phalaborwa • Entrepreneur Webinar • Workshop for sustainable entrepreneurship • School of law entrepreneurship training • Train the Trainer Educators Entrepreneurship |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|-----|--|-------------|-------------|--|
| | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 Global Enterprise Experience • Department of Basic Education's E3 Programme • Commercialization Training Workshop • FOREST 21 Workshop • UCfERI Door-to-Door Marketing Campaign • Youth African Entrepreneurship Institute (YAEI) event programme |
| | 6.3 | Number of students engaged in entrepreneurial activities | 1500 | 982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Entrepreneurship Skills Development Workshop • Incorporating entrepreneurship in the curriculum • Makhado Agricultural Farmers Day • Matangari spring water • SAFooST Product Development Showcase • Studentpreneur Summit • Entrepreneur webinar • One Res One Garden Project • CSIR Cybersecure Tech Hackathon • Beekeeping and Herbal Garden • Bee apiary visit at Tshidzivhe community • Entrepreneurship Student Ambassadors Programme • BIKS Coachlab Entrepreneurship Programme • Commercialisation Training Workshop • EDHE Intervarsity Regional Rounds Report • Entrepreneurship Development Masterclasses - 7 students • Entrepreneurship workshop for the Department of Youth Development • HRM and LR entrepreneurship workshop • Student engagement in EDHE mock presentation • Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme Recruitment • Township Entrepreneurship Alliance door-to-door campaign • UCfERI door-to-door Marketing Campaign (four students) • Youth African Entrepreneurship Institute (YAEI) event programme |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO7 | To enhance financial sustainability | 7.1 | Third-stream income generated as a percentage of university income | 10% | 17% | The funds generated far exceeded expectations due to effective marketing of the University's good work. |
| | | 7.2 | Number of commercialised research projects | 1 | 1 | SAFooST Product Development Showcase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth Lerotse • Dithotse Delight Cookies • BB jam • Fruit Chutney • BaoMelon Juice • Pumpkin Fruit Leather • BaoBite |
| SO8 | To be an anchor institution for effective integrated local and regional development | 8.1 | Number of interventions leading to the development of Thohoyandou into a University Town | 3 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thulamela Cleaning up Campaign • UK-SA Commission, South African Urban Resilience Programme, Thulamela Project • Vhembe District Energy and Industrialization Workshop |
| | | 8.2 | Number of entrepreneurial-related Memoranda of understanding with government entities, civil society, grassroots communities, and business organisations | 2 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU with Thomas More University • Absa Funding Contract • MoU with Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) |
| SO9 | To develop enterprise | 9.1 | Number of businesses incubated | 2 | 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allu's Bakery • Dengankho Farm • Mochedis Bakery • Mpfunie Khensa Hosi • Rasels Delights • Arehone Sweetcakes • Glow & Show • Murendy Delicious Treats • Divhani Famous Icecream • Funufunyu ML • Frozen Store Boutique • Tshirenbe Desinity extra class • Zone incorporation Advisory Taxation and Accounting |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | Target 2024 | Actual 2024 | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| | | 9.2 | Number of people in the community trained in enterprise development | 600 | 789 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop Farmers Workshop. • Matangari spring water • UNIVEN Connect Supplier Day • Vhembe Biosphere Youth Capacity-Building Workshop • NYDA Entrepreneurs Training Attendance Register • Hlaneki community project • Livestock Farmers Entrepreneurship Workshop • Ngwenani Ha Themel • NYDA Youth Training- Tshikonelo • Trained 160 community youth entrepreneurs and cooperatives • IC4LED PSC |

Strategic Thrust 3: Governance for outstanding scholarship

This strategic thrust serves primarily as an enabler, contributing to the development of professional support services and governance frameworks to achieve operational excellence. It aims to ensure that the University promotes a value-driven service culture, develops an optimal decision-making framework, promotes effective governance, and develops enabling processes and systems. Additionally, it seeks to build a strong brand that enhances the experience of stakeholders with a vested interest in the University, its academic offerings, and its wide array of services.

Table 15 below provides a detailed presentation of performance under this strategic thrust.

Table 15: Governance for Outstanding Scholarship

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | 2024 Target | 2024 Actual | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO10 | To promote effective institutional governance and management systems | 10.1 | Number of governance controls developed/ reviewed and implemented | 5 | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Plagiarism Policy • Assessment Policy • Change in Accounting Policy from Revaluation • E-Learning Policy and Procedures • Monitoring and Evaluation of Teaching and Policy • WIL Policy • Institutional Performance Report • Student Affairs Committee Terms of Reference • Terms of Reference for Facilities Planning and Infrastructure Committee • Finance Committee Work Plan • Work Plan Audit and Risk Committee • Work Plan Finance Committee |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | 2024 Target | 2024 Actual | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO11 | To enhance the corporate identity of UNIVEN | 11.1 | Percentage of stakeholders with a positive perception of the University's brand | 70% | 80.1% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Plan Governance, Ethics and Compliance • Work Plan Human Resources Committee • Work Plan Student Affairs Committee <p>The percentage increase is due to the effective implementation of the marketing, branding and communication strategy.</p> |
| | | 11.2 | Number of the University's brand enhancement initiatives | 20 | 103 | The target was exceeded due to the effective implementation of the marketing, branding, and communication strategy. |
| SO12 | To improve governance of institutional information systems | 12.1 | Number of ICT general controls and security reviews conducted | 5 | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptop and ICT Hardware Policy • Change Management Policy • Bring-Your-Own-Device Policy • ICT Project Management Framework Policy • Policy on Learning and Development • Disaster Recovery Plan |
| | | 12.2 | Number of business continuity assessments conducted | 5 | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITS tests • Combined Penetration Vulnerability Test |
| SO13 | To strengthen systems and processes for infrastructure development and maintenance | 13.1 | Number of Infrastructure Masterplan reviews conducted annually and submitted to Council | 1 | 1 | Target achieved |
| | | 13.2 | Number of maintenance plan(s) approved for implementation | 1 | 1 | Target achieved |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | 2024 Target | 2024 Actual | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|---|
| SO14 | To enhance security in and around Campus and in off-campus residences | 14.1 | Number of Integrated Protection Services Master Plan reviews conducted | 1 | 1 | Target achieved |
| | | 14.2 | Number of campus safety and security programmes conducted | 14 | 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-based violence campaign • Mental health student residences (part of “She Conquers”) • Move for a mental health campaign for staff members • Protection exam-drive campaign • Student career fair for staff and students • Student safety meeting • Orientation for first-year students • Whistle-blowing security awareness campaign • SRC security induction • First Things First awareness campaign • Visible patrol awareness campaign • Community policing forum launch with SAPS • Surprise search at the DBSA male residence • Substance abuse campaign |

Strategic Thrust 4: Linkages, partnerships, and internationalisation

This focuses on the establishment and strengthening of strategic local, regional, and international partnerships and collaborations in respect of teaching and learning, community engagement, and research and innovation. These efforts significantly contribute to enhancing the quality of the academic project, producing well-equipped graduates to compete effectively in a global market. Through this strategic thrust, the University is challenged to strengthen its international profile and visibility while promoting reciprocal scholarly partnerships characterised by joint international research projects and programmes.

Table 16 provides a detailed presentation of annual performance under this strategic thrust.

Table 16: Linkages, Partnerships, and Internationalisation

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | | 2024 Target | 2024 Actual | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|--|
| SO15 | To strengthen the University's local, regional, and international profile and visibility | 15.1 | Number of established partnerships with local and national industries and businesses, including non-governmental organisations | 8 | 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU with Campus and School Safety Training Institute • MoU with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology • MoU with Indalo Inclusive SA • Combined Collaboration Agreement • Agreement with BANKSETA for skills development initiative • Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with CLOVITA Consulting Services • MoA with De Gann Inn Property Accommodation • MoU with Delight Training Academy • International collaboration with the Humboldt Colloquium • Mou with NALEDZI Environmental Consultants • MoU with SABS • MoU with the Department of Tourism • MoU with the Department of Employment and Labour • Mou with Tshirombeni Enviro Tours |
| | | 15.2 | Number of major local and regional initiatives in which the University is involved | 15 | 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 International Annual SASPEN Conference • BRICS Young Scientist Forum Sirius University • Department of Forestry and Fisheries Cites Information Sharing Session • Millet symposium and Ayurveda day • SACI North Section 2024 Young Chemists • Meeting at UCT to learn a new acquisition mode of LC-MS using a demo SWATH-DIA enabled LC-MS instrument • MoU with the National Department of Sports, Arts and Culture • MoA with MMC Business Solutions • MoA with Badplaas Resort, Loskop Dam Resort, Blade Canyon Resort, Tshipise Forever Resort and Warmbath Forever Resort • MoA with New Mexico State University • Agro-ecological farming for Climate Justice Fund_Dzomo La Mupo Report • Belgium-South Africa networking |

| Strategic Objective | | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | 2024 Target | 2024 Actual | Comment on progress | |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------|--|---|
| | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimani Agricultural School outreach • Donation of desktop computers • Farmer-led irrigation development within Thulamela and Makhado municipalities • Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilient Project • MoU with the National University of Lesotho • Mukula Integrated School outreach • Sustainable Rural Community Development | |
| | | 15.3 | Number of joint publication units with international partners | 15 | 16, 52 | The 2024 research publications output report is in progress, and the audited report will be available in May 2025 after being audited by external auditors and submitted to DHET. |
| | | 15.4 | Number of public lectures and colloquiums by highly recognised local, regional, and international academic/public figures/dignitaries | 9 | 24 | Target exceeded due to the effective implementation of the university's linkages, partnerships, and internationalisation strategy. |
| | | 15.5 | Number of local, regional, and international research projects in which the University participates | 4 | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Royal Society International Collaborative Research • Prof Jegede: Assessing climate-related loss and damage impacts on socioecological and transformational development in Vhembe District Municipality • Project agreement with South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) • MoA with Meadow Feeds Delmas |
| | | 15.6 | Number of agreements with local, regional, and international representatives of funding organisations | 4 | 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU with Lepelle Water • MoU with the Council for Scientific Innovation and Research • MoU with Water Research Council • South African Statistical Association Sithembile Award • MoA with ETDPSETA • SAP Bursary Agreement • Learning Agreement with University College Leuven-Limburg • MoU with MQA • Project Funding Agreement with SAMRC |

| Strategic Objective | Key Performance Measure/ Indicator | 2024 Target | 2024 Actual | Comment on progress |
|---------------------|---|-------------|-------------|---|
| | 15.7 Number of signed MoUs/ agreements between UNIVEN and other institutions (including joint qualifications) in place to promote reciprocal scholarly partnerships | 4 | 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU with UFS • MoU with WITS • UP-UNIVEN FORESTRY GENETICS MoU • MoU with the University of Virginia • MoU with Babcock University • MoU with Beihang University • MoU with the University of Lagos • MoU with the Xinzheng University • MoA with New Mexico State University • MoU with Kenyatta University-Nairobi • MoU with Florida International University • MoU with the University of Western Cape |

Enrolment Performance against Ministerial Targets

This section provides an overview of the institution's performance based on the Ministerial-approved enrolment targets (size and shape), as set out in the approved institutional Annual Performance Plan for 2024. It also presents a three-year historical trend of achievements from 2022 to date.

Table 17: Performance of on the Ministerial-Approved Enrolment Targets

| Key performance indicator | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | % Deviation |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | 2022 | | 2023 | | 2024 | | |
| A. ACCESS | | | | | | | |
| Headcount totals | | | | | | | |
| First-time entering undergraduates | 3 474 | 3 416 | 3 376 | 3 429 | 3 539 | 3 579 | +1.2 |
| Headcount enrolments | 17 678 | 14 949 | 15 178 | 15 376 | 15 343 | 15 807 | +3 |
| Headcount enrolments (Foundation Provisioning) | 955 | 1 456 | 974 | 1 494 | 993 | 1 513 | +52 |
| Headcount enrolments (total undergraduates) | 15 722 | 13 504 | 13 747 | 13 793 | 13 890 | 14 311 | -3 |
| Headcount enrolments (total postgraduates) | 1 957 | 1 445 | 1 431 | 1 583 | 1 453 | 1 496 | 3% |
| Enrolments by major field of study | | | | | | | |
| Science, Engineering, Technology | 7 628 | 6 266 | 7 784 | 6 050 | 7 919 | 6 370 | -22.2 |
| Business/management | 3 472 | 2 281 | 2 095 | 2 802 | 2 124 | 2 614 | +33.7 |
| Education | 2 377 | 1 460 | 1 731 | 1 541 | 1 762 | 1 880 | +11 |
| Other humanities | 4 201 | 4 941 | 3 570 | 4 983 | 3 548 | 4 942 | +39.5 |
| B. SUCCESS | | | | | | | |

| Key performance indicator | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | % Deviation |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | 2022 | | 2023 | | 2024 | | |

Graduates

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Graduates (undergraduates) | 3083 | 3 426 | 2 697 | 2 843 | 2 784 | 2 509 | -19.5 |
| Graduates (postgraduates) | 817 | 570 | 315 | 424 | 326 | 699 | +114 |
| Success rate | 85% | 87% | 81% | 76% | 81% | 80% | -1 |

Undergraduate output by scarce skills

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Engineering | 66 | 44 | 67 | 34 | 68 | 26 | -62 |
| Life and physical sciences | 668 | 883 | 681 | 631 | 695 | 708 | +1.9 |
| Animal and human health | 464 | 292 | 473 | 239 | 482 | 133 | -49 |
| Teacher Education | 818 | 263 | 835 | 279 | 851 | 54 | -72 |
| Success rate | 85% | 87% | 81% | 76% | 81% | 80% | -1 |

C. EFFICIENCY

Instructional/Research Professional Staff

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Headcount and FTE ² of permanent instructional/research professional staff | 438/428 | 425/411 | 438/428 | 469/469 | 438/428 | 488/492 | +7/9.6 |
| % Staff with doctoral degrees ³ | 41% | 49.2% | 41% | 43.7% | 41% | 45.3% | +4.3 |
| Number of nGap staff | 13 | 15 | - | n/a | 3 | 1 | -67 |
| The ratio of FTE students to FTE instructional/research staff | 34,5 | 27 | 28,9 | 27 | 29,2 | 25 | -14 |

RESEARCH OUTPUT

Research output totals

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|------|------|------|-------------------|--------|
| Publication units per FTE staff ⁴ | 1.0 | 1.03 | 0.71 | 0.82 | 0.73 | 1.06 ⁵ | +0.33 |
| Research master's graduates | 193 | 117 | 76 | 64 | 79 | 67 | -15.2 |
| Doctoral graduates | 47 | 39 | 41 | 38 | 42 | 72 | +71.43 |



PROF NB NTHAMBELENI

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL



MR S B MAMPEULE

CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

² Full-time equivalent

³ Academic and support staff

⁴ Instructional research staff FTEs

⁵ Report on the Evaluation of the 2022 University Research Outputs

Report of the Senate

Changes in Academic Structures

UNIVEN'S academic structure remained unchanged during 2024, except for ongoing change management efforts aimed at appropriately resourcing and more effectively supporting the four faculties.

Senate Composition and Meeting Attendance

The composition of the Senate as of 25 October 2024, the date of the final ordinary Senate meeting for the year, is outlined below. At that time, the term of the 2024 SRC had expired, and new student representatives had not yet been appointed.

- › Vice-Chancellor and Principal (Chairperson)
- › DVC: Teaching and Learning
- › DVC: Research and Postgraduate Studies
- › DVC: Corporate Services
- › University Registrar
- › Chief Financial Officer
- › Executive Deans of Faculties
- › Deputy Deans (Teaching and Learning, and Research and Postgraduate Studies)
- › Director of the School of Law
- › Heads of Departments
- › Professors, including Research Professors
- › Elected members (Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers)
- › Director: Institute for Rural Development
- › Director: Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance
- › Director: MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages, Arts and Culture
- › Director: OR Tambo Institute of Governance and Policy Studies
- › Director: Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning
- › Director: Community Engagement
- › Director: International Relations and Partnerships
- › Director: Library Services

- > Director: Student Affairs
- > Representatives of the Council
- > SRC Representatives
- > Resource Persons
- > Observers
- > Invited members/representatives/others
- > Secretariat

Senate Meetings

The Senate held six meetings, two of which were special meetings.

| Date of meeting | Type of meeting |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 13 March 2024 | Ordinary |
| 28 May 2024 | Ordinary |
| 26 August 2024 | Ordinary |
| 25 October 2024 | Ordinary |
| 08 November 2024 | Special |
| 03 December 2024 | Special |



Teaching and Learning

Significant developments and achievements in Teaching and Learning

In 2024, the University reviewed its teaching and learning policies, and a new Anti-Plagiarism Policy was developed and approved by Council. These policy developments strengthened the governance of the teaching and learning environment, enabling more effective responses to evolving educational dynamics and quality assurance standards.

Additionally, a Student Success Survey was conducted to identify challenges affecting the teaching and learning environment. The findings provided valuable insights and informed targeted recommendations to address barriers to student success at UNIVEN. A separate survey was also carried out to assess the pedagogical needs of academic staff, thereby enabling the design and implementation of focused support and professional development initiatives.

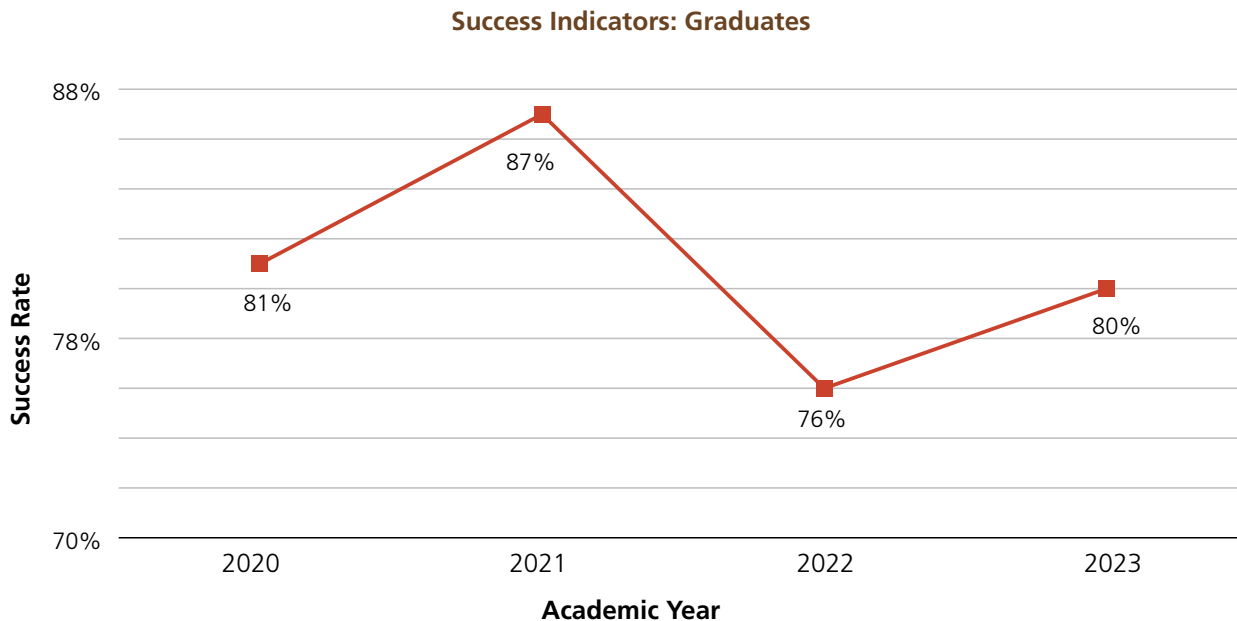
Limitations of access to certain courses

There were no limitations to access in 2024.

Student Success

The student success rate improved by 4% in 2023 compared to 2022, reaching a total success rate of 80%. This improvement reflects the University's concerted efforts and targeted interventions to enhance overall academic performance. The revised target for the degree success rate, set during the Department of Higher Education and Training's approved mid-term review in 2023, is 81%.

Figure 3: 2020–2023 UNIVEN Success Rate



Using the audited 2023 HEMIS data, the aggregate throughput and dropout rates for the 2019 FTEN cohort enrolled in three-year undergraduate degrees across all faculties, as well as the retention and throughput statistics in the last tracking year (2023) by major CESM categories, for three-year undergraduate degrees, are shown below.

Table 18: Three-year Cohort Analysis (Retention, Dropout and Throughput Rates)

| Report Filters | | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Cohort Year: 2019 | | | | |
| Tracking Year: 2023 | | | | |
| Cohort - Minimum time - total: 1; 2; 3 | | | | |
| Cohort - Department: All | | | | |
| Cohort - Faculty: All | | | | |
| Report Date: 25 March 2025 08:03:12 | | | | |
| Number of Records: 5 | | | | |
| Cohort - Faculty | Cohort | Retention Rate | DropOut Rate | ThroughPut Rate |
| HEALTH SCIENCES | 158 | 1,9% | 14,6% | 83,5% |
| HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND | 828 | 8,2% | 26,4% | 65,3% |
| MANAGEMENT, COMMERCE AND LAW | 816 | 19,1% | 19,5% | 61,4% |
| SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND | 1 390 | 11,7% | 36,5% | 51,7% |
| Total: | 3 198 | 12,2% | 28,6% | 59,2% |

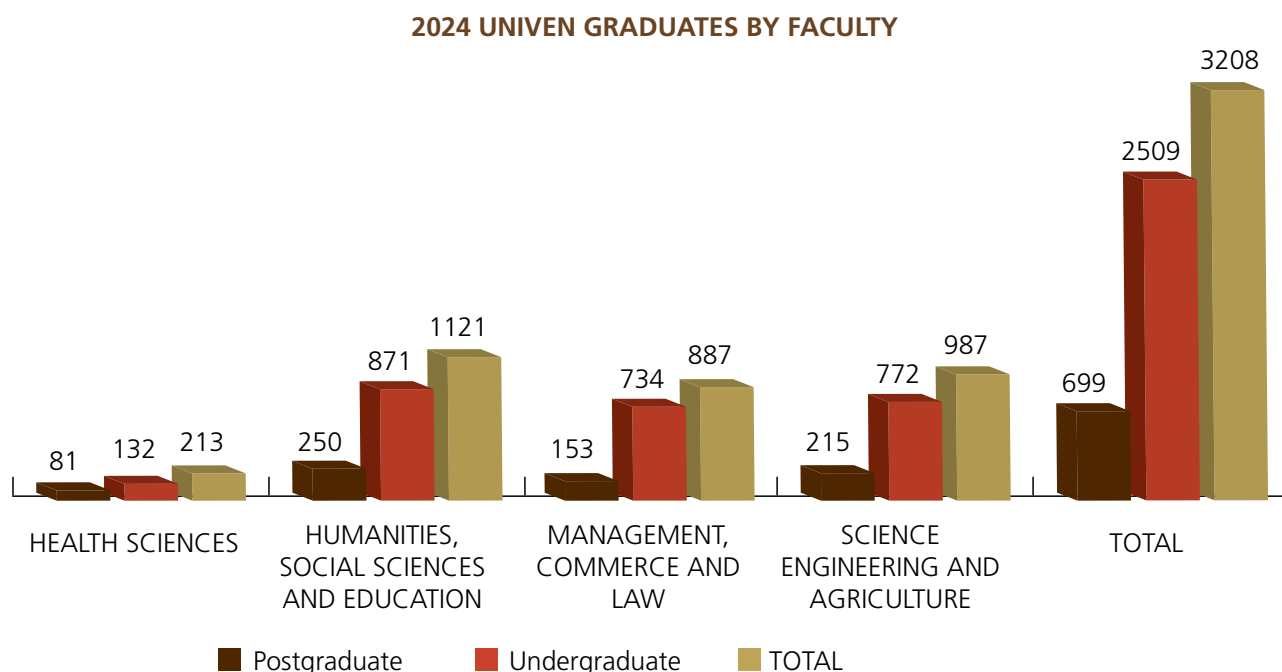
Using the audited 2023 HEMIS data, the aggregate throughput and dropout rates for the 2019 FTEN cohort enrolled for 4-year undergraduate degrees across all Faculties and the Retention and throughput statistics in the last tracking year (2023) by major CESM categories, for 4-year undergraduate degrees:

Table 19: Four-year Cohort Analysis (Retention, Dropout and Throughput Rates)

| Report Filters | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Cohort Year: 2019 | | | | |
| Tracking Year: 2023 | | | | |
| Cohort - Minimum time - total: 4 | | | | |
| Cohort - Department: All | | | | |
| Cohort - Faculty: All | | | | |
| Report Date: 25 March 2025 08:03:57 | | | | |
| Number of Records: 4 | | | | |
| Cohort - Faculty | Cohort | Retention Rate | DropOut Rate | ThroughPut Rate |
| HEALTH SCIENCES | 260 | 9,2% | 16,5% | 74,2% |
| HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION | 1 099 | 14,0% | 22,6% | 63,4% |
| MANAGEMENT, COMMERCE AND LAW | 206 | 30,6% | 16,0% | 53,4% |
| SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND AGRICULTURE | 343 | 40,8% | 24,5% | 34,7% |
| Total: | 1 908 | 20,0% | 21,4% | 58,6% |

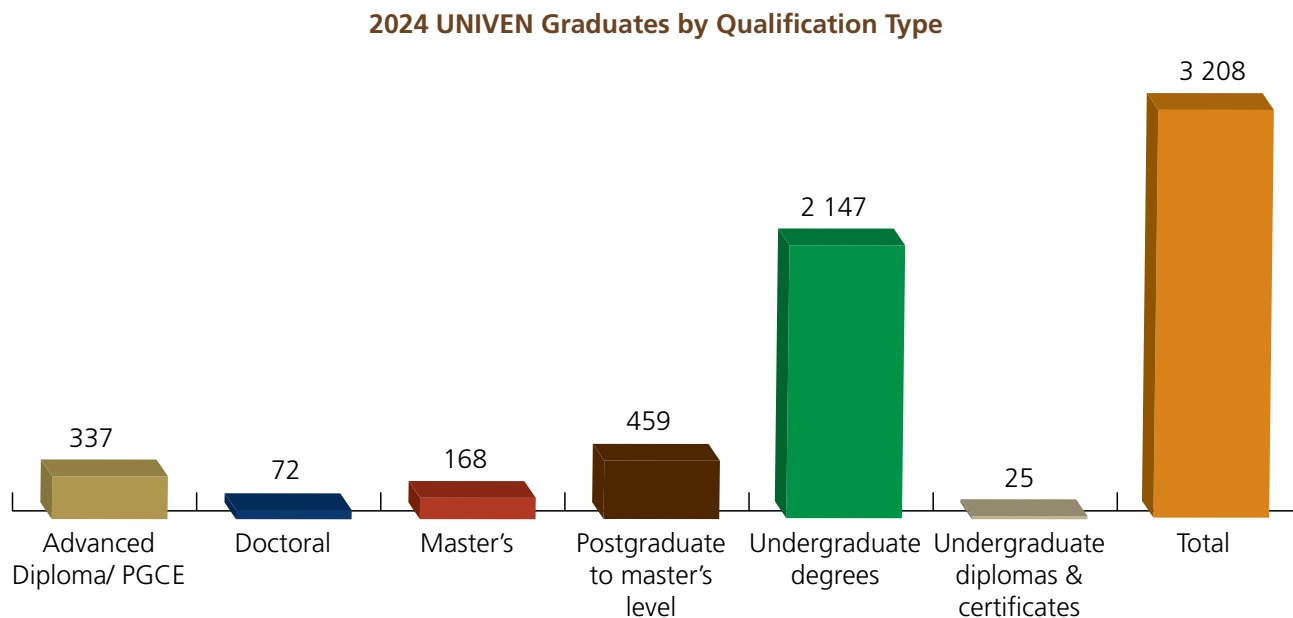
Graduate Output

Figure 4: 2024 UNIVEN Graduates by Faculty



The University produced 3,208 graduates in 2024, a slight decline from the 2023 total of 3,267. Performance in doctoral, master's and honours qualifications was impressive. The data shows improved performance from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, followed by FMCL, while the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education experienced a significant decline compared to 2023.

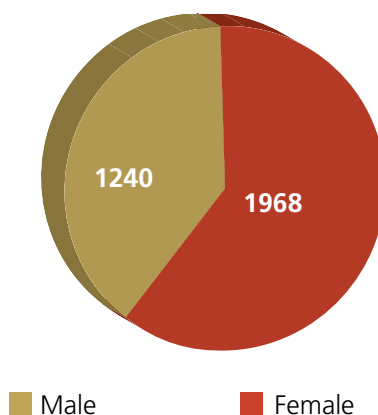
Figure 5: UNIVEN Graduates by Qualification Type



The University produced a total of 3,208 graduates in 2024. This includes an impressive 72 doctoral and 168 master's degrees, 459 honours degrees, 337 advanced diplomas and postgraduate certificates in education (PGCEs), 2,147 undergraduate degrees, and 25 undergraduate diplomas and certificates, resulting in an overall graduation rate of 20.9%.

Figure 6: 2023 UNIVEN Graduates by Gender

2023 UNIVEN Graduates by Gender



The University produced a total of 1,240 male graduates and 1,968 female graduates. This performance reflects a steady overall graduation rate of 20.9%. A concerning trend that has become evident at UNIVEN, and within the sector, is the decline in male student success, as indicated by the preponderance of female graduates in 2024.

Awards and Achievements

The Vice-Chancellor's Student Academic Excellence Awards initiative sought to acknowledge and celebrate students' academic achievements across various levels and faculties. The principle guiding these awards is that students who demonstrate exceptional academic performance are formally recognised. To qualify, students must achieve a minimum average mark of 75%—calculated from all registered modules—and from an ordinary examination written once, excluding special or aegrotat exams.

The distribution of winners is thoughtfully structured, with a total of 35 winners across different levels and faculties. Each level, from year/level one to three, had three winners in three different faculties. This broad distribution ensured wide recognition of academic excellence across various fields of study. However, there was an exception in one faculty where only two winners were recognised at level two.

The awards were significant, with first-place winners receiving both a certificate and a trophy to symbolise their hard work and dedication. In addition, one overall winner was selected to receive an additional trophy, highlighting their outstanding achievement as the top performer among all the awardees.

VC Academic Staff Excellence Awards

These awards are held annually in collaboration with the other two directorates: the Research and Innovation Directorate and the Community Engagement Directorate. As mentioned, the awards serve a dual purpose—recognising and appreciating excellence, while also motivating broader participation among academic staff. Academics from all four faculties and across all academic levels (from Junior Lecturer to Full Professor) participated. On the day of the awards, the Vice-Chancellor recognised ten academic staff members, with Prof Mulovhedzi achieving the highest score.

Research

Significant Developments and Achievements in Research

National Research Foundation Rating

The target of 40 NRF-rated researchers was achieved, with the University recording 41 by the end of 2024 academic year, meeting the goal within the planned timeframes. This contributed meaningfully towards enhancing research outputs for innovation and impact.

However, a key challenge remains: the poor retention of NRF-rated researchers, which must be seriously addressed. Control measures should be implemented to prevent the loss of these researchers to other institutions.

As of 1 January 2024, UNIVEN had 41 NRF-rated researchers—31 males and 10 females. There was some movement across categories between 2023 and 2024. For example, five researchers progressed from the Y to the C category. Within the C category, several researchers moved from C3 to C2, others from C2 to C1, and one from C1 to B2. The distribution as at December 2024 was as follows: B2 = 2, B3 = 1, C1 = 6, C2 = 13, C3 = 11 and Y2 = 8.

Table 20: Total NRF-rated Researchers per Faculty

| Area | Number |
|--|-----------|
| Executive and Senior Management | 2 |
| Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture | 24 |
| Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law | 5 |
| Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education | 5 |
| Faculty of Health Sciences | 3 |
| Special Category of Academics and Adjunct Professors | 2 |
| Total rated researchers | 41 |

Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

The University had a total of 22 Postdoctoral Research Fellows in the 2024 academic year. Of these, 13 were funded by UNIVEN, three by the NRF, two by the NRF South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI), one by SAMRC, one by UCT, and two by the Water Research Commission—one of which was jointly supported by the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA).

Table 21: Postdoctoral Research Fellowships per Faculty

| Area | Number |
|--|-----------|
| Executive and Senior Management | 1 |
| Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture | 13 |
| Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law | 1 |
| Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education | 6 |
| Faculty of Health Sciences | 1 |
| Total number of Postdoctoral research fellows | 22 |

Special Category of Academics

In December 2024, there were 36 Special Categories of Academics and Adjunct Professors distributed across various faculties and departments. The Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture had 17 Adjunct Professors; the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education had two; the Faculty of Health Sciences had three; and FMCL had seven. The Directorate of Research and Innovation had five, and the Office of the Vice-Chancellor had two Adjunct Professors.

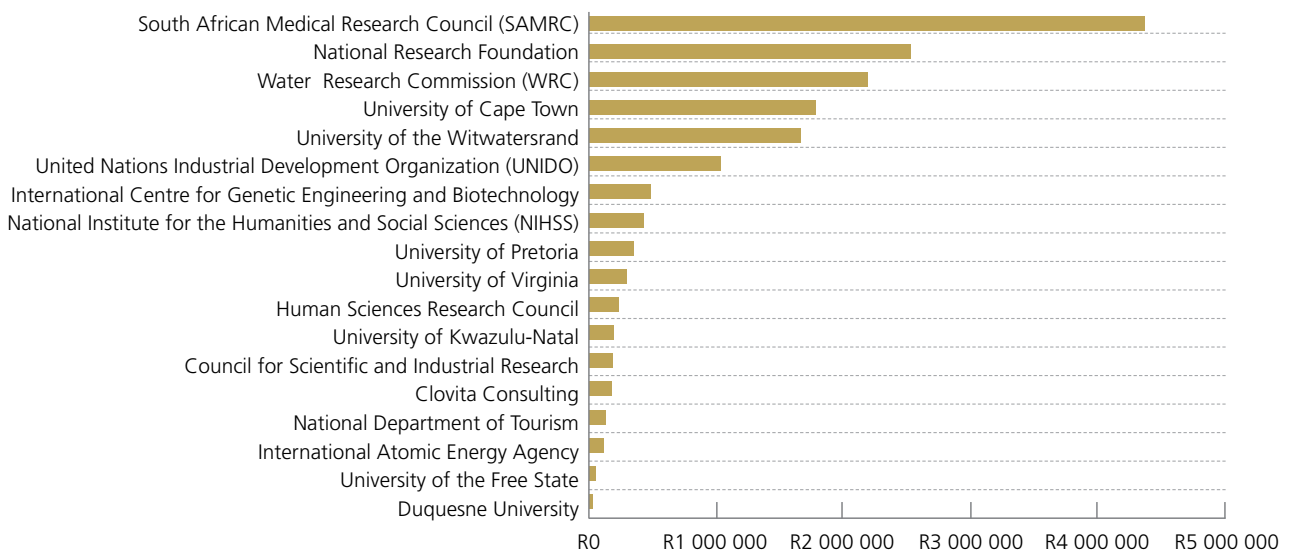
Research Professors: In addition, the University had three Research Professors in December 2024—two in FSEA and one in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education. As of January 2024, the Faculty of Health Sciences and FMCL did not have any Research Professors.

Funding and Awards

External Staff Funding

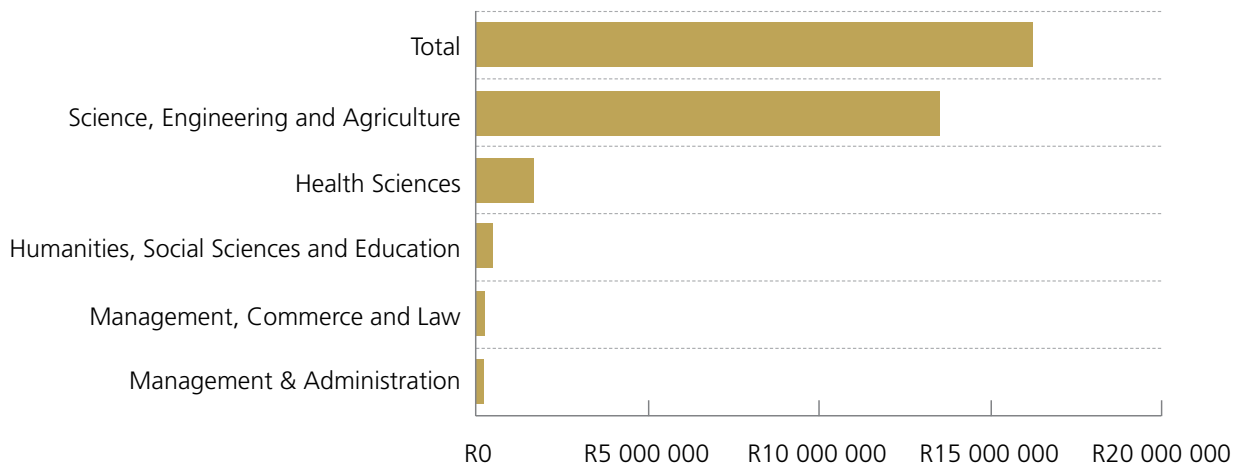
By December 2024, the total funding received for staff research projects amounted to **R16,210,405.78**. This funding came from various external sponsors, including national research funding agencies and councils such as the NRF, SAMRC, Water Research Commission, CSIR, and HSRC. Additional funding was secured through collaborative research projects with other institutions of higher learning—such as Duquesne University, University of Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, University of the Free State, UKZN, and University of Virginia—as well as from government departments including the Department of Tourism, National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Support also came from other international funding agencies.

Figure 7: External Staff Research Funding



The total funding received for staff research projects and activities from external funding agencies, January - December 2024

Figure 8: External Staff Research Funding per Faculty/Division



The total funding for staff research projects per faculty/ division, January - December 2024

External Student Funding

In 2024, student research funding from NRF totalled R38 million. This included R14 million for Honours students, R18 million for Master's students, and R6 million for Doctoral students.

Research and Publication Committee Student Funding 2024

In 2024, the Research and Publication Committee (RPC) supported Master's students with R2 million and Doctoral students with R1 million (see Table 22 below).

Table 22: RPC Funding per Faculty

| Faculty | Masters | Doctoral |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture | R 742 923 | R 142 787 |
| Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law | R 371 670 | R 658 191 |
| Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education | R 795 663 | R 223 544 |
| Faculty of Health Sciences | R 357 496 | R 176 942 |
| Total Amount Supported | R 2 267 752 | R 1 201 461 |

2024 Vice-Chancellor Excellence Awards

The Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards are designed to celebrate and highlight the accomplishments of UNIVEN staff in research, teaching and learning, and community engagement. The awards recognise staff who have delivered exceptional professional service and are further intended to encourage performance excellence. On 4 October 2024, the University held the 2024 Vice-Chancellor's Awards at the Premier Hotel, Thohoyandou. UNIVEN is committed to continuing to impact lives through community engagement initiatives, teaching and learning modalities, research, and innovation.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal recognised **169** academic researchers from the Directorate of Research and Innovation (DRI), Community Engagement (CE) and Centre of Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL). The Directorate of Research and Innovation awarded **157** researchers. The NRF rated researchers and supervisors, in which special categories and women in the research were also recognised.

University Research Open Day Awards

On 19 July 2024, UNIVEN celebrated excellence in research through a Research Open Day, recognising research undertaken across various faculties. The event featured engaging presentations by esteemed postgraduate students and other categories of researchers, who showcased their groundbreaking work across multiple disciplines.

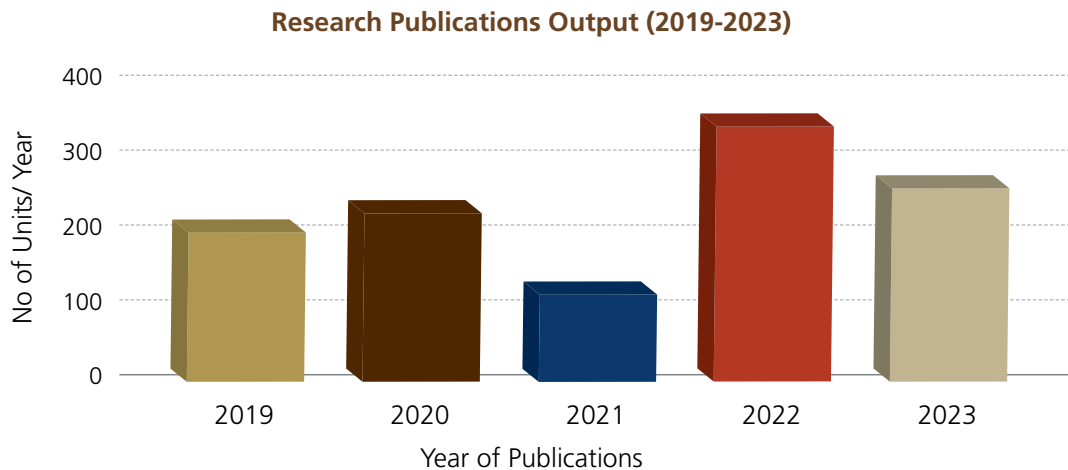
Awards were presented for the first, second and third best posters at the honours, master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral levels, as well as for academic staff. Additional awards were given for experimental displays and setups in each faculty. A total of 60 awards were presented.

Output Produced

The allocation of 2023 research publication outputs is a subsidy from DHET. DHET awarded UNIVEN a total of **256.42** units, with an estimated rand value of **R34 million**. A total of **17.74 units** were rejected, primarily due to books and chapters not meeting subsidy requirements because of inadequate technical supporting documents.

The 2023 award of **256.42 units** represents a decrease of **81.52 units** compared to the **337.94 units** awarded for 2022. The decline in units is largely attributed to the low number of submissions in 2021, following the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of the internal submission system, CONVERIS. The submission of the 2021 outputs occurred in 2022, which significantly increased the 2022 allocation, making it higher than in any other year.

Figure 9: Research Publications Output 2019–2023



2024 Community Engagement Projects: Societal Impact Review

UNIVEN remains steadfast in its commitment to engaged scholarship and societal transformation. In pursuit of its vision *“to be a university leading in engaged scholarship”*, the University undertook its first comprehensive review of three flagship community engagement projects during the 2024 reporting period. This milestone aligns with the Strategic Plan 2021–2025 and the NRF framework, marking a significant step in the institution’s efforts toward community transformation.

These projects reflect the University’s ongoing commitment to cultivating locally relevant, socially responsive, and globally competitive graduates. As a university embedded in the community it serves, we are proud to present the 2024 Societal Impact Review, which showcases the tangible contributions of our academic partnerships, civic engagement, and knowledge transfer initiatives.

Of the five projects planned for the strategic reporting period, three priority community engagement projects were assessed, underscoring the University’s dedication to social responsibility, transformative education, and meaningful community impact. The review highlighted the institution’s tangible contributions to social, economic, and environmental development in the Vhembe and Mopani regions.

UNIVEN’s perspective on Societal Impact

UNIVEN defines societal impact as the direct or indirect contribution of research to improving people’s quality of life, encompassing innovation, technological advancement, sustainability, and policy development. Societal impact pathways describe the structured processes through which research, innovation, and community engagement generate tangible social, economic, and environmental benefits. These pathways trace the progression from initial research inputs and activities, through measurable outputs and outcomes, to lasting impacts on society.

At a glance: Societal Impact Review Process

- › **Participatory Approach:** Projects were evaluated using inclusive, community-engaged methodologies rooted in the Theory of Change (ToC) framework.
- › **Collaborative Indicator Development:** Impact indicators were co-created by project leaders, community members, and an independent panel.
- › **Validation and Reflection:** Findings were shared across platforms, including a confirmatory workshop with community partners.
- › **Strategic Alignment:** The evaluation was guided by UNIVEN's strategic priorities, the NRF impact framework, and global best practices.

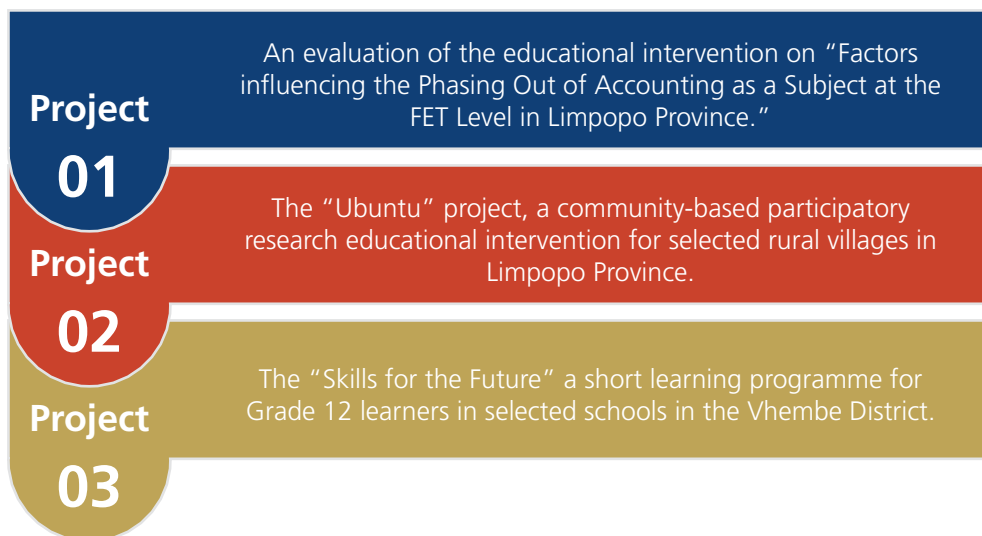
Key Emphases

- › Community engagement as a transformative and socially responsive practice
- › Integration of indigenous knowledge and real-world problem-solving
- › Strengthening Quintuple Helix partnerships for broader societal impact
- › Use of societal impact pathways to go beyond academic outputs.

Community engagement projects reviewed for societal impact

An overview of the comprehensive review of three earmarked community engagement projects is presented below. Each project made a meaningful contribution to UNIVEN's societal impact pathways, supported the institution's strategic objectives, and aligned with key SDGs.

Figure 10: Reviewed Community Engagement Projects



Project 1: Factors Affecting the Phasing out of Accounting as a Subject Area at the FET Level in Limpopo Province

This project investigated the declining uptake of Accounting in selected rural schools, a trend that threatens the development of vital financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills among learners. The project aimed to identify the underlying causes of this decline and its broader societal implications. It also sought to explore strategies to revitalise interest in the subject and enhance educational outcomes, particularly in under-resourced areas.

The project was implemented in the Vhembe and Mopani Districts, targeting two schools as pilot sites. School A (Macema), a rural school, has participated in the project since 2022, while School B (Khwevha), located in a suburban setting, was incorporated in 2024. This dual-site implementation enabled comparative insights across rural and suburban contexts.

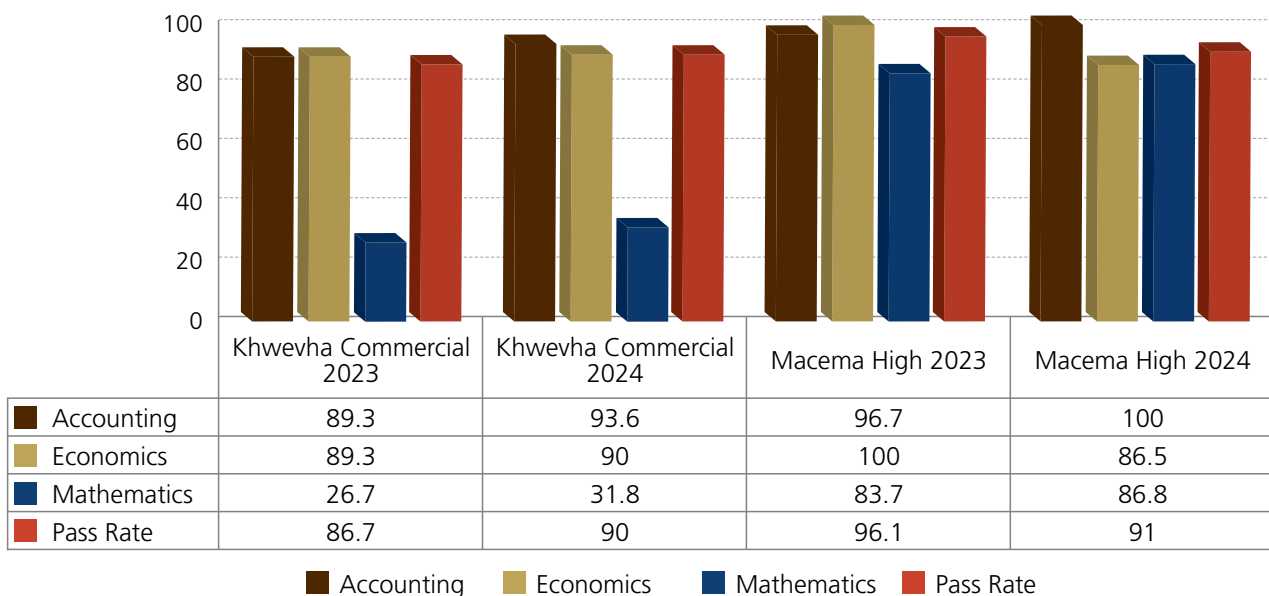
At the end of 2021, prior to the intervention, School A's Grade 12 Accounting pass rate stood at 61%. Following the intervention in 2022, the pass rate rose significantly to 95.8%, with only one learner (3.33%) not meeting the pass requirements. This notable improvement highlights the effectiveness of the targeted support provided through the project.

The review process examined the primary factors driving this development, including changes in the curriculum, trends in student enrolment, the availability of qualified teachers, and the perceived significance of the subject. The key findings that emerged from the review following the interventions include:

- › **Increased learner motivation and subject interest:** The intervention led to a marked rise in learners' enthusiasm for improving their performance in Accounting (see Figure 11 below).
- › **Enhanced teacher confidence and pedagogy:** Educators adopted new teaching and learning strategies that were previously unfamiliar to them, resulting in more effective classroom engagement.
- › **Stronger community involvement:** Active support from community leaders and parents contributed to improved learner attendance and sustained engagement.
- › **Strengthened school-community collaboration:** School staff worked closely with learners and surrounding communities, promoting a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Figure 11: Matric Results of the Participating Schools

Matric Results Performance Outlook of Commercial Subjects in Participating Schools



Key Recommendation

UNIVEN should strengthen its strategic partnerships with schools, communities, and policymakers to scale high-impact educational interventions that are contextually relevant, sustainable, and aligned with societal needs, while also building internal capacity to measure, evaluate, and sustain community-engaged scholarship.

High-Level Concluding Remarks from the Review Panel

- › The phasing out of Accounting as a subject has significant societal implications, adversely affecting learners, educators, and the broader economic landscape.
- › The intervention at the two pilot schools clearly demonstrated that strategic support, targeted teacher training, and community engagement can significantly improve educational outcomes.
- › A province-wide intervention is necessary to preserve Accounting as a critical component of the curriculum, thereby supporting both economic participation and skills development.
- › The project delivered tangible benefits across multiple dimensions, including learner performance, teacher capacity-building, and strengthened community-school partnerships.
- › Given its demonstrated success, there is a compelling case for scaling the initiative across Limpopo Province, as the discontinuation of Accounting could undermine national financial literacy and youth employment prospects.

Project 2: Promotion of Ubuntu: A Community-Based Participatory Research Educational Intervention for Selected Rural Villages in Limpopo Province

Initiated in 2021, the Ubuntu project is an ongoing, multifaceted, trans-university flagship initiative led by the Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Public Health. The project aims to promote social cohesion and empower communities through community-based participatory research (CBPR) educational interventions. These interventions are grounded in the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasises shared values, mutual respect, and collective well-being.

The initiative was implemented in selected rural villages of Limpopo Province, with a particular focus on the Vhembe and Mopani Districts. Participating villages included Ha-Muraga, Malavuwe, Nweli, Ngove, Hlaneki, and Sekhunyane.

This is a collaborative initiative involving multiple higher education institutions, namely UNIVEN, the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg, and NWU, demonstrating strong inter-institutional commitment to community-based, values-driven educational transformation.

Findings from the review process indicate that embedding Ubuntu principles within educational interventions yields significant positive outcomes. The table below highlights the impact indicators and key findings associated with the review:

Table 25: Impact Indicator and Findings – Ubuntu Project

| Impact Indicator | Findings |
|--|--|
| Level of Participation | Active engagement was observed across various levels, including bootcamps, workshops, and training sessions. |
| Inclusivity in Participation | Participation was inclusive across ethnic groups (Venda and Tsonga), educational backgrounds, and social status. |
| Strengthening Community Bond | Initiatives like the ambassador programme and youth theatre promoted a sense of belonging and collaboration. |
| Reduction in Social Isolation | New support networks emerged, such as the retired nurses' group and elderly peer circles, enhancing cohesion. |
| Strengthening Partnerships and Collaboration | Collaborations were nurtured with traditional leadership, civic associations, schools, and health organisations. |
| Economic Impact | The project promoted entrepreneurship and supported the formation of cooperatives. |
| Entrepreneurship Initiatives | Income-generating school gardens were established and connected with agricultural experts; a group was trained at FSEA Farm. |
| Student Involvement | Students actively participated in various community activities and interventions. |
| Sustainability and Long-Term Impact | Enabled community participation in academic conferences and promoted intergenerational learning. |
| Quality of Life Improvement | The intervention encouraged healthier lifestyles, fostered positive behavioural change, and contributed to reductions in crime and adolescent pregnancy. |
| Ethical Standards | Ethical principles were upheld through respectful engagement with traditional leaders and adherence to community consent processes. |

Key Recommendations

- › **Sustain Engagement:** Researchers and project leaders should continue engaging directly with beneficiaries and adopt a train-the-trainer approach to build local capacity.
- › **Promote Community Health:** Strengthen health education through targeted workshops, especially involving retired nurses and underrepresented groups such as men.
- › **Promote inclusive Participation:** Encourage the active involvement of all community members, with a focus on building stronger relationships and improving communal well-being.
- › **Involve Traditional Leadership:** Chiefs and local leaders should actively support the project by participating in training, contributing to community development efforts, and offering venues for meetings.
- › **Strengthen Ambassador Leadership:** Ubuntu project ambassadors should consistently embody and promote Ubuntu values within their communities.
- › **Ensure Institutional Support:** The Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation (DCEEIIC) should prioritise capacity building for panel members to enhance the design, evaluation, and scalability of future interventions.

High-Level Concluding Remarks – Ubuntu Project

- › The project aligned strongly with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), addressing both community health and learning needs.
- › There is clear potential for scaling, resource mobilisation, and institutional integration to broaden its impact.
- › With stronger partnerships and refined strategies, the project can serve as a national model for engaged scholarship.
- › The use of international evaluation standards and well-defined impact indicators ensured a credible, results-driven assessment.
- › The project empowered stakeholders and demonstrated the transformative potential of Ubuntu-based interventions.
- › Community members showed strong willingness to learn and apply Ubuntu principles to improve their lives.
- › The initiative contributed to academic knowledge through scholarly outputs, even though beneficiaries remain largely on the margins of academic production.

Project 3: Skills for the Future Programme

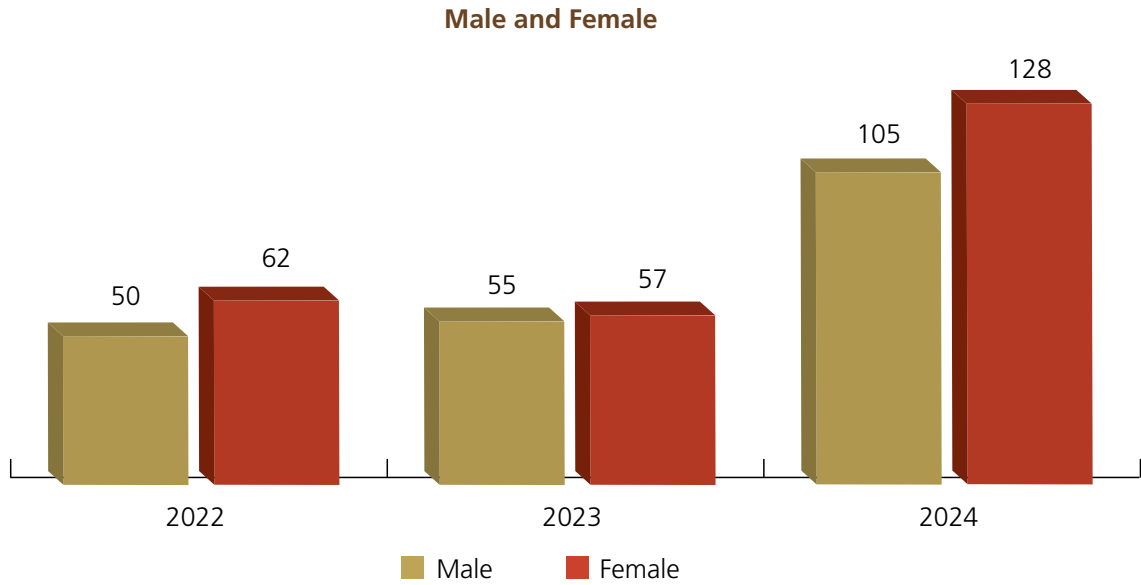
This project aims to empower Grade 12 learners in the Vhembe District, particularly in rural schools, by equipping them with essential digital, academic, and life skills necessary for success in their future careers, with a focus on holistic development and long-term employability. Participating schools include Phaswana Secondary School, Thohoyandou Technical School, Thohoyandou High School, Marude Secondary School, Tshivhidzo Masiagwala Secondary School, Maphaphuli Secondary School, Raluswielo Secondary School, Ralson Tshinnane Secondary School, Shayandima Secondary School, Dimani Secondary School, and Khwevha Commercial School.

Through experiential learning, mentorship, and exposure to creative and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, learners are encouraged to discover their potential, develop personal brands, and engage meaningfully with their communities. The Skills for the Future (SFFP) project bridges the gap between traditional education and real-world readiness by promoting innovation, problem-solving, and youth empowerment in response to challenges such as unemployment and skills mismatch.

Key findings from the reviews included:

- › A total of 458 learners benefited from the programme, most of whom were female (see Figure 12 below), across 11 participating schools.
- › The intervention provided digital literacy training, career guidance, mental health support, and mentorship opportunities.
- › UNIVEN students actively participated as tutors and mentors, promoting civic responsibility and peer-led learning within the community.

Figure 12: Learner Gender Analysis

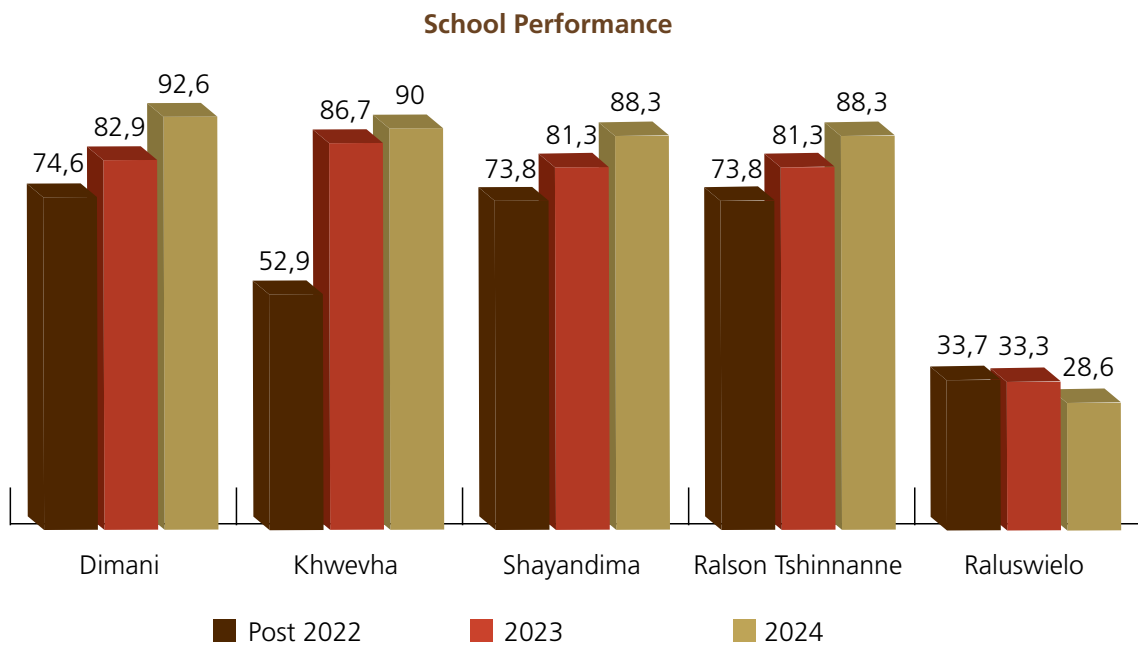


Review Results

- › The intervention led to improved academic performance and enhanced self-mastery among learners (see Figure 13 below).
- › It actively promoted STEM education and encouraged entrepreneurial thinking, especially in under-resourced communities.
- › The project contributed to the creation of sustainable learning environments and strengthened community engagement through inclusive and culturally relevant educational practices.

School performance for schools that participated in the Skills for the Future Programme in 2024 is as follows:

Figure 13: School Performance



Alignment with UNIVEN's Strategic Direction

The Skills for the Future Programme (SFFP) exemplifies UNIVEN's commitment to its third mission, *engaged scholarship and social responsibility*, through targeted interventions that connect the University with rural communities.

- › **Infrastructure and Inclusivity:** By donating digital tools (e.g., tablets and laptops), UNIVEN supports equitable access to technology, enhancing digital inclusion and innovation.
- › **Community Engagement:** SFFP strengthens ties with local schools, addressing educational inequalities and promoting sustainable community-university partnerships.
- › **Student Development:** The programme cultivates civic responsibility by involving UNIVEN students as mentors, offering real-world experience in volunteerism and community service.
- › **Holistic, Learner-Centred Education:** SFFP promotes self-awareness, mental health, and confidence-building alongside technical training, encouraging lifelong learning and personal growth among both university and secondary school learners.
- › **Work-Based Learning Integration:** UNIVEN students apply academic knowledge in mentoring roles, gaining exposure to workplace dynamics and contributing meaningfully to community development.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

The Skills for the Future Programme advances multiple SDGs by addressing rural education challenges, promoting youth empowerment, and supporting inclusive development:

- › **SDG 4: Quality Education**
 - › Promotes equitable access to quality learning resources in rural areas.
 - › Enhances digital literacy, as well as technical and entrepreneurial skills, to prepare learners for future careers and higher education.
- › **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**
 - › Prepares youth for Industry 4.0 through exposure to digital technologies.
 - › Encourages entrepreneurial thinking, financial literacy, and small business skills for long-term economic empowerment.
- › **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**
 - › Addresses educational disparities in underserved communities, promoting access to opportunities in the digital economy.
- › **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**
 - › Demonstrates effective collaboration between UNIVEN, BANKSETA, local schools, and the Vhembe District Department of Education to achieve shared development goals.

Outcomes and Spin-Offs

The Skills for the Future Programme has generated a range of impactful outcomes and meaningful spin-offs that extend beyond the core curriculum:

- › **Peer Tutorship:** Twelve alumni now serve as volunteer peer tutors, embodying a "pay-it-forward" model of community upliftment.

- › Innovative Learning Solutions: Learners demonstrated creative problem-solving by repurposing malfunctioning laptops into functional learning tools, fostering curiosity and resilience.
- › Support for Advancement Learners: Additional academic support was provided to matric rewrite cohorts, with backing from the BANKSETA.
- › Work Ethic and Resourcefulness: The programme promoted a culture of responsibility and “doing more with less” among UNIVEN student volunteers.
- › Student-Led Social Support: UNIVEN students established a social responsibility fund to assist vulnerable learners with transport, food, and sanitary packs.
- › Ubuntu in Action: The project cultivated a lived sense of Ubuntu, promoting solidarity, empathy, and communal care between university students and high school learners.

Key Contributions to Education

The Skills for the Future Programme is making significant contributions to education by redefining learning in underserved contexts and preparing learners for the future world of work:

- › **Laying Foundations for Future Careers**

Early exposure to digital literacy and data science equips learners with essential skills for careers in technology, engineering, and other high-demand sectors.

- › **Promoting Curiosity and Lifelong Learning**

The SFFP nurtures a mindset of exploration, encouraging learners to engage in continuous learning and develop diverse skills.

- › **Empowering Problem Solvers**

Through hands-on, project-based learning, learners develop critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, enabling them to address real-life challenges.

- › **Creating Progressive and Sustainable Learning Environments**

Activities such as diagnosing and repairing hardware, assembling devices, and installing software build technical competence, independence, and confidence.

- › **Making Learning Meaningful**

By linking theory to real-world application, the programme ensures that education is practical, relevant, and community-focused, leaving learners with a clear sense of purpose and impact.

The Cross-Cutting Outcomes

Societal Impact Pathways

All projects were systematically mapped along societal impact pathways, tracing the journey from initial inputs and activities to long-term social, economic, and environmental benefits, and ensuring alignment with strategic impact goals.

Community Engagement

Community engagement was a foundational element across all projects, ensuring that interventions were contextually relevant, locally responsive, and co-created with the intended beneficiaries.

Sustainability

A strong emphasis was placed on sustainability, with each project incorporating strategies such as capacity building, institutional partnerships, and resource mobilisation to secure lasting impact beyond the project lifecycle.

The Emerging SDG Contributions

The three reviewed projects demonstrated strong alignment with—and meaningful contributions to—the United Nations SDGs in the following ways:

Table 26: Linkages to SDGs

| Project | UNIVEN Strategic Thrust | SDG | Project Contribution to UNIVEN Societal Impact Pathways |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Factors affecting the phasing out of Accounting as a subject area at the FET level in Limpopo Province | ST 1: Student-centred and Engaged Scholarship | SDG 4: Quality Education | Social integration and community engagement Innovation teaching |
| | | SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities | Equity and access |
| | | SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals | Sustainability and long-term impact. Social impact on Accounting Subject. |
| Promotion of Ubuntu: A community-based participatory research educational intervention for selected rural villages in Limpopo Province | ST 1: Student Centredness and Engaged Scholarship | Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being. | Social responsibility role. Community engagement. Social cohesion |
| | ST 2: Entrepreneurial University. | Goal 4: Quality Education | Entrepreneurship initiatives Quality of life improvements |
| | ST 4: Linkages, Partnership and Internationalisation | SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals | Strengthening partnerships and collaboration Sustainability and long-term impact |
| Skills for the Future Programme | ST 1: Student Centered and Engaged Scholarship | SDG 4: Quality Education | Access and Equity: SFFP provides rural learners with digital literacy, addressing the digital divide. Skill Development: Learners gain digital literacy, technical expertise, and entrepreneurial skills, equipping them for future careers and higher education opportunities. |

| Project | UNIVEN Strategic Thrust | SDG | Project Contribution to UNIVEN Societal Impact Pathways |
|---------|-------------------------|--|--|
| | | SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth | <p>Future-Ready Youth: The programme introduces learners to Industry 4.0 technologies and prepares them for modern workplace demands.</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Thinking: Training in financial literacy and small enterprise management promotes economic independence and job creation.</p> |
| | | SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities | By addressing systemic educational challenges in rural schools, SFFP promotes social equity, providing underserved learners with opportunities to succeed in technology-driven fields. |
| | | SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals | Collaborative Efforts: The programme exemplifies partnerships between UNIVEN, the BANKSETA, local schools, and the Vhembe District Department of Education to achieve shared developmental objectives. |

Key Recommendations

Based on the findings of the 2024 societal impact review, the following key recommendations are proposed to strengthen future community engagement and research initiatives:

- › Recognise and support project leaders and ambassadors who demonstrate commitment to community transformation and engaged scholarship.
- › Address human resource gaps and ensure the sustainability of projects through long-term funding mechanisms and strategic resource allocation.
- › Enhance student participation, with a particular focus on increasing the involvement of postgraduate students in community-based research and mentorship.
- › Promote inclusive planning by actively involving traditional councils and local governance structures to ensure cultural relevance and community ownership.
- › Prioritise school-based interventions while supporting pathways to community self-reliance and sustainable development.

Lessons Learned from the Review

Change Management

Effective change management requires inclusive planning and active stakeholder engagement to ensure ownership, relevance, and long-term commitment from all participants.

Methodological Challenges

The review identified the need for a clearer distinction between programme outcomes and broader societal impact, highlighting the importance of refining evaluation frameworks for improved precision and accountability.



Narrative-Based Evaluation

Narrative approaches, including community testimonials and storytelling, provided rich, context-specific insights that often exceeded what could be captured through quantitative metrics alone. This highlights the importance of integrating qualitative and quantitative data in impact assessments.

International Relations and Partnerships

UNIVEN's internationalisation strategy is entrenched in Strategic Thrust 4: Linkages, Partnerships, and Internationalisation. Through this strategic thrust, the University aims to enhance its international profile and visibility, and promote reciprocal scholarly partnerships characterised by joint international research projects and programmes. During the reporting period, the International Relations and Partnerships (IRP) Directorate worked to align and streamline processes that support teaching and learning, research, and community engagement.

Standard Operating Procedures

To support the implementation of the UNIVEN 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, the IRP Directorate developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure that internationalisation processes are implemented consistently and uniformly. These SOPs provide clear guidelines and frameworks for implementing various internationalisation processes in alignment with UNIVEN policies and procedures.

The following three SOPs were approved during the reporting period.

- i. International Student Admission and Registration
- ii. International Visiting and Exchange Scholars



iii. Joint Degree and Credit Transfer

Together, these SOPs support key strategic areas of internationalisation and drive the University's efforts to embed internationalisation within its core activities.

Partnerships for Global Impact

UNIVEN's International Partnership Framework seeks to maximise impact by:

- › Defining the University's partnership and collaboration needs
- › Leveraging joint international publications and research collaborations
- › Digitising the University's MoU database
- › Developing a fit-for-purpose partnership allocation matrix.

The IRP Directorate reviewed and categorised 147 MoUs and MoAs by region, thematic area, faculty, and sector. This exercise provided clarity for aligning partnerships with the DHET policy framework, which prioritises partnerships within SADC, Africa, BRICS, and globally. These strategic partnerships are essential to advancing knowledge production, internationalising teaching and learning, increasing third-stream income, and strengthening UNIVEN's global presence.

Internationalisation Week

The 2024 Internationalisation Week and Conference was held under the theme "*Building Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development*." This event brought together diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources to address complex challenges that transcend borders. It was dedicated to fostering international collaboration and promoting sustainable growth, marking a significant milestone in UNIVEN's journey towards Africa's sustainable development.

Enhancing International Student Recruitment

International students have a significant financial contribution to South African higher education institutions and the broader economy. Their success enhances the profile and global rankings of local universities, contributing to institutional revenue. The IRP Directorate has made notable progress in increasing international student intake.

In 2024, recruitment efforts were intensified, admission and registration processes were streamlined, and support for international students was strengthened.

During the 2024 intake:

- › The University received 168 applications, primarily from the SADC region
- › 102 were undergraduates, and 66 were postgraduates
- › 37 undergraduate students and 12 postgraduates were admitted
- › 22 undergraduate and 6 postgraduate students registered

Including returning students, the University enrolled a total of 56 international students for the 2024 academic year, representing 0.9% of the student population.

Report on the Institutional Forum

Mrs MT Mulaudzi; Chairperson of Institutional Forum



Since its establishment, the Institutional Forum has actively fulfilled its advisory role on various institutional matters, including the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor and the approval of the Executive and Senior Management structure.

Members of the Forum are elected from both internal and external constituencies. The following constituencies each have two representatives serving on the Institutional Forum:

- › The Council
- › University Management
- › Senate
- › Academic Staff
- › Administrative Staff
- › Service Staff
- › Convocation
- › Student Representative Council

The nomination process for representatives was conducted transparently and democratically. The following members served as representatives of their respective constituencies on the Institutional Forum:

Table 27: Institutional Forum Composition

| IF COMPOSITION | MEMBERS |
|----------------------|---|
| Convocation | Ms K.S. Makgoka Ms S.S.T. Masutha |
| The Council | Mr R. Mushweu Dr A.M. Mashilo |
| Management | Mr A. Mukheli Mrs M.T. Mulaudzi (Chairperson) |
| Senate | Prof M.G. Mapaya Prof P.O. Bessong |
| Academic Staff | Mr R. Chauke (Deputy Chairperson) Dr T.E. Sekitime |
| Administrative staff | Mr L. Netshifhefhe Mrs R. Nelwamondo |

| IF COMPOSITION | MEMBERS |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Service staff | Mrs G. Luvhimbi Vacant |
| Student Representative Council (SRC) | Mr M. Makhanya Mr M. Macheque |

All members of the Institutional Forum represent clearly identifiable and significant constituencies, and each member is mandated to act on behalf of their respective constituency in the Forum's deliberations and advisory functions.

The Executive Committee of the Institutional Forum consists of:

- a. The Chairperson: Mrs M.T. Mulaudzi
- b. The Deputy Chairperson: Mr R. Chauke
- c. The Secretary: Dr J.J. Baloyi (University Registrar)
- d. Three additional members:
 - › Ms K.S. Makgoka
 - › Ms S.S.T. Masutha
 - › Prof M.G. Mapaya

The Institutional Forum performs the following functions:

- a. Advises the Council on issues affecting the institution, including:
 - › The implementation of the Higher Education Act and national policy on higher education
 - › Race and gender equity policies
 - › The selection of candidates for senior management positions
 - › The code of conduct, mediation and dispute resolution procedures
 - › The promotion of an institutional culture that fosters tolerance and respect for fundamental human rights.
- b. Performs any other functions as determined by the Council.

During the year under review, the Institutional Forum convened seven meetings.

Table 28: Institutional Forum Meetings Attendance

| NAME | 06/03/2024 | 08/05/2024 | 01/08/2024 | 11/10/2024 | 06/11/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Mrs M.T. Mulaudzi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 2. Mr A. Mukheli | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 3. Dr A.M. Mashilo | √ | x | √ | √ | x | 3/5 |
| 4. Mr R. Mushweu | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 5. Prof M.G. Mapaya | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |

| NAME | 06/03/2024 | 08/05/2024 | 01/08/2024 | 11/10/2024 | 06/11/2024 | Number of meetings attended |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 6. Prof P.O. Bessong | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | 4/5 |
| 7. Mr R. Chauke | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 8. Dr T.E. Sikitime | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 9. Mr L. Netshifhefhe | √ | x | √ | √ | √ | 4/5 |
| 10. Mrs M.R. Nelwamondo | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 11. Ms G. Luvhimbi | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 12. Mr M. Makhanya | √ | x | x | √ | √ | 3/5 |
| 13. Mr M. Macheque | √ | x | x | √ | √ | 3/5 |
| 14. Ms K.S. Makgoka | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 15. Ms S.S.T. Masutha | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 16. Adv A.E. Nemukula | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5/5 |
| 17. Dr J.J. Baloyi | √ | √ | x | √ | √ | 4/5 |

Key Outputs for the Year Under Review

The Institutional Forum delivered the following significant output during the reporting period, reflecting its advisory role and contribution to institutional governance:

- › Institutional Forum Work Plan for 2024

In addition, the Forum engaged with the following key matters:

- › Automation processes
- › Postgraduate processes
- › Staff retention
- › Gender-based violence
- › Employment equity and transformation
- › Grow Your Own Timber programme
- › University structure



Mrs. M T MULAUDZI

CHAIRPERSON



Dr J.J. BALOYI

UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

Report on Internal Administrative /Operational Structures and Controls

Mrs MD Makwarela: Director Internal Audit and Risk



Systems Of Internal Control

UNIVEN emphasises strong corporate governance through regular reviews of operating procedures and risk management strategies to safeguard assets and ensure compliance with policies. The University employs both manual and automated controls to mitigate risks and leverages updated information technology to enhance operational efficiency and security against cyber threats. Key governance structures, such as the Risk Management and Audit Committees, play a critical role in overseeing internal controls and aligning assurance activities with strategic risks. Recent reviews have informed the development of an internal audit plan focused on high-risk areas.

Operational Structures

The Governance, Ethics and Compliance Unit has been established to identify and monitor UNIVEN's legislative universe. This unit guides faculties and departments on matters related to business continuity and terms of reference, and facilitates the review and updating of institutional policies.

During the year, the Internal Audit Department issued a directive emphasising the importance of conducting timely reviews of standard operating procedures (SOPs) to ensure continued alignment with approved policies and confirm that they accurately describe day-to-day processes and controls in place. Both manual and automated controls are integrated into operational procedures to mitigate risk effectively.

The University continues to leverage up-to-date and secure information technology to support efficient operations and to reduce the risk of cyber threats. The ICT Steering Committee meets quarterly to deliberate on issues such as information security, data backups, user access, and disaster recovery. In 2024, the ICT Department placed strong emphasis on cybersecurity awareness, delivering training to the university community through various platforms.

The Internal Audit function evaluates the adequacy of the internal control environment through the implementation of the annual plan and submits reports with recommendations to management. These reports are shared with the Council through the Audit and Risk Committee. UNIVEN assessed its internal control systems for the 2024 financial year, with a focus on the effectiveness of financial reporting controls and the safeguarding of assets. This was done through the overall conclusion of the internal audit function, as well as management reports from key operational areas.


Risk Management facilitated the review of the 2024 strategic risk register, which informed the development of the risk-based internal audit plan. The plan prioritises the evaluation of controls in high-risk areas.

Governance Structures

Under the guidance of the Registrar, who serves as Secretary to the Council and its committees, the University's oversight structures reviewed and approved the terms of reference and work plans for their respective committees to ensure that oversight duties are carried out systematically.

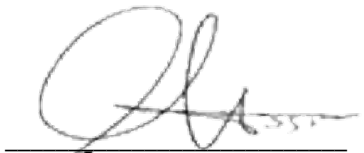
The University's Combined Assurance Forum continued to provide oversight structures with reports on risk coverage assurance. Independent (external) chairpersons chair both the Risk Management Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. The University can report that both committees have made positive contributions in terms of risk, audit, technology, and compliance management processes.

The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed management reports on internal administrative and operational structures and controls for the year under review at its final meeting for 2024. These reports detailed the processes and measures in place to safeguard the University's assets.



MRS MD MAKWARELA

DIRECTOR OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND RISK



PROF S MOSOETSA

CHAIRPERSON: AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE



Report on Risk Exposure Assessment and Management



Mr T Sibiyi
Risk Officer



Ms N Maharaj
Chairperson: Risk Management Committee

Risk assessment, management, and monitoring are ongoing processes integrated into the daily operational and management activities of UNIVEN. Risk assessment focuses primarily on financial, non-financial, and fraud-related risks that may hinder the University from achieving its strategic objectives.

An external whistle-blowing hotline, managed by an independent service provider, provides a secure platform for stakeholders to report suspected fraud, corruption, or unethical behaviour. The Risk Management Committee (RMC) received eight whistleblowing allegations, some of which have already been investigated and finalised.

The RMC meets quarterly to consider risk exposures and review management action plans to address identified risks. The committee’s activities are reported quarterly to the Audit and Risk Committee of the Council.

The Risk Management Committee, during the period under review, was constituted as follows:



Table 29: RMC Composition

| Name | Designation/ Member status |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Ms N. Maharaj | Chairperson (Independent External Member) |
| 2. Prof N.B. Nthambeleni | Vice-Chancellor and Principal |
| 3. Prof E Lekalakala-Mokgele | Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning |
| 4. Dr R. L. Martin | Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Corporate Services |
| 5. Mr L.B. Kraziya | Chief Financial Officer |
| 6. Prof N.N. Feza | Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Postgraduate Studies |
| 7. Dr J.J. Baloyi | Registrar (Secretary to Council) |

The following staff members have a standing invitation to the RMC:

- › Director: Internal Audit and Risk
- › Director: Financial and Management Reporting
- › Director: Supply Chain Management and Expenditure
- › Director: Facilities Management
- › Director: Protection Services
- › Director: Human Resources
- › Director: Strategy and Risk
- › Director: Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance
- › Director: Information Communication and Technology
- › Risk Officer
- › Head: Governance and Compliance



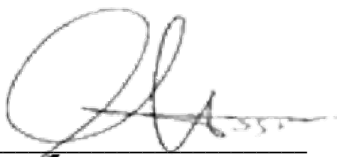
MR T SIBIYA

RISK OFFICER



MS N MAHARAJ

CHAIRPERSON: RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



PROF S MOSOETSA

CHAIRPERSON: AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE



Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

Committee Charter

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) has established formal terms of reference approved by the Council. The committee has conducted its activities in accordance with these terms and has effectively fulfilled the responsibilities outlined within them.

The primary purpose of the ARC is to assist the Council in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities related to financial reporting, internal controls, financial risk management, the auditing process, and the University's compliance with laws, regulations, and its code of ethics.

Membership and meeting attendance

ARC is composed of seven members, including three experts who are not Council members. These experts possess the necessary skills and experience to serve on the Committee. The Committee meets at least four times a year, as stipulated in its terms of reference.

The University's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Registrar, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and Chief Financial Officer are ex officio members of the committee.

Directors of Financial Management and Reporting, Information and Communication Technology, Legal Services, Human Resources, Facilities Management, Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance, Communications, and the internal and external auditors attend meetings by invitation as resource personnel.

The University Risk Officer and the independent external chairperson of the ARC also attend meetings to appraise the committee of emerging risk issues and changes to the University's risk exposures.

During the year under review, ARC held six meetings, of which two were special.

Roles and responsibilities

ARC assists the Council in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities for the financial reporting processes, the system of internal control, governance process, risk management, audit process and the University's process for monitoring compliance with the laws and regulations and the code of conduct.

External auditors

ARC confirmed that the external audit service provider, Chapu Chartered Accountants, is independent of the University and accredited by the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (IRBA).





University of Venda

STUDENT ADMINISTRATION

It also considered the firm's compliance with criteria relating to independence or conflicts of interest as prescribed by the IRBA. The committee subsequently recommended, for approval by the Council, Chapu Chartered Accountants as the external auditor for the 2024 financial year.

Internal financial control

In addition to the report on internal operational structures and controls set out in this annual report, we have reviewed and discussed formal reports from the internal audit.

Based on the reports and the internal control checks conducted in 2024, and after considering the information and explanations provided by management, the committee believes that the University's system of internal financial controls is effective. This system supports the preparation of reliable financial statements, except for the issues identified in the external auditors' report.

Financial statements, including accounting practices

The committee has reviewed the financial statements of the University and its subsidiaries and is confident that they comply with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions.

Expertise and experience of the finance function

ARC received reports on human resources within the finance department, as outlined in the quarterly reports from the Chief Financial Officer. These reports also detailed training interventions aimed at enhancing the skills and expertise of the team. Throughout 2024, key vacancies continued to be filled, and the finance department initiated a project to automate several processes to leverage automated controls.

Internal audit

ARC has considered and approved the 2024 Internal Audit Plan during the year under review. The Internal Audit function is tasked with assessing and providing assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment. The Director of Internal Audit, who has direct access to the committee, is responsible for regularly reporting the findings of the internal audit work based on the agreed-upon Internal Audit Plan.

MRS MD MAKWARELA

DIRECTOR: INTERNAL AUDIT AND RISK

PROF S MOSOETSA

CHAIRPERSON: AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Report on Transformation

Introduction

This section outlines UNIVEN's transformation efforts across teaching and learning, research, community engagement, employment equity, and disability support. It highlights the University's commitment to inclusivity through targeted initiatives that promote diversity, support underrepresented groups, and advance gender equality.

Employment Equity

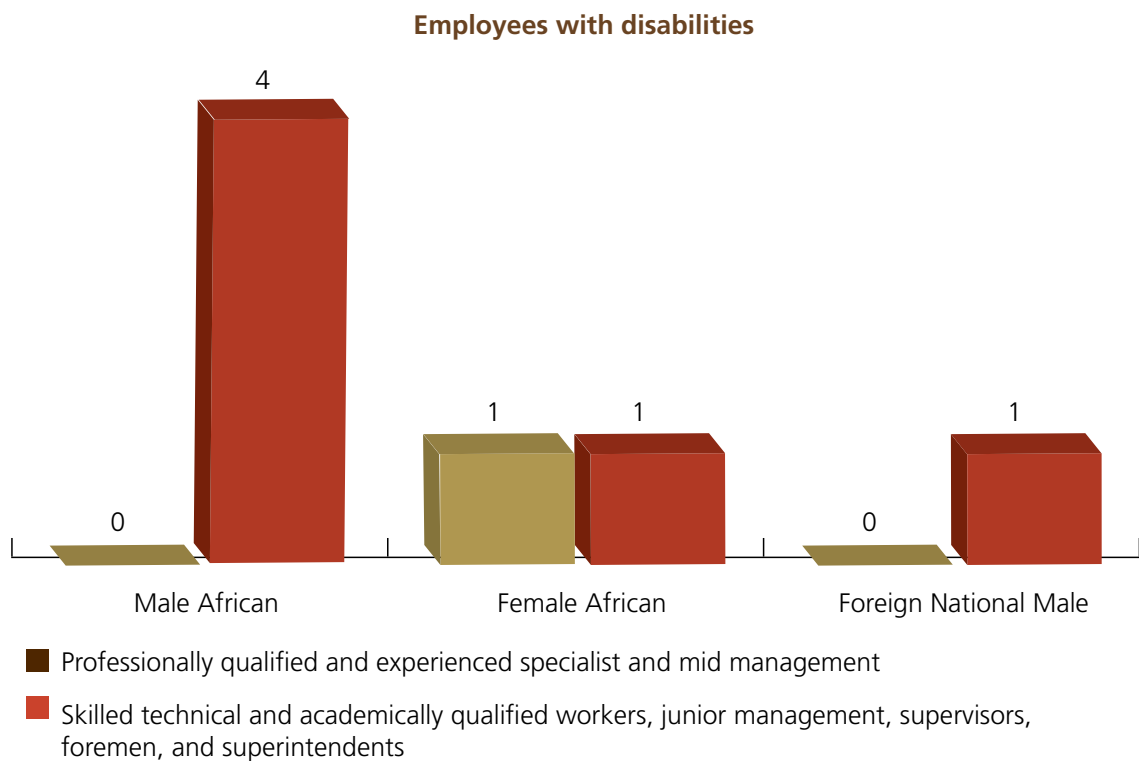
Table 30: Workforce Profile

| Occupational Level - 31 December 2024 | Plan vs Actual | Male | | | | Female | | | | Foreign Nationals | | |
|--|-----------------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | | A | C | I | W | A | C | I | W | Male | Female | Total |
| Top Management | Plan | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| | Actual | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| | Variance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | -1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Senior Management | Plan | 10 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 23 |
| | Actual | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 26 |
| | Variance | -1 | 0 | 1 | -1 | -3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | -3 |
| Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management | Plan | 45 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 85 |
| | Actual | 47 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 33 | 2 | 133 |
| | Variance | -2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -29 | 0 | -48 |
| Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foremen, and superintendents | Plan | 294 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 297 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 48 | 8 | 666 |
| | Actual | 308 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 292 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 29 | 11 | 653 |
| | Variance | -14 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | -1 | 1 | 2 | 19 | -3 | 13 |
| Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making | Plan | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 116 |
| | Actual | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 88 |
| | Variance | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| Unskilled and defined decision making | Plan | 54 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 94 |
| | Actual | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47 |
| | Variance | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47 |
| Temporary Staff | Plan | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| | Actual | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| | Variance | -3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -6 |
| TOTAL PERMANENT & TEMPORARY | Plan | 480 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 424 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 54 | 10 | 1000 |
| | Actual | 435 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 433 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 64 | 13 | 969 |
| | Variance | 45 | 1 | 1 | 3 | -9 | -2 | 1 | 3 | -10 | -3 | 31 |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| | On Target |
| | Above Target |
| | Below Target |

As of 31 December 2024, African females remained underrepresented, particularly in the professionally qualified category (-17), while foreign nationals exceed the target (+29), largely due to their permanent resident status and permanent appointments. Replacements of foreign nationals occur only upon termination of service, such as through retirement or resignation. UNIVEN is reviewing its Employment Equity (EE) Plan to align with the five-year sectoral targets gazetted by the Department of Employment and Labour (DoEL) on 15 April 2025, in support of compliance and transformation objectives.

Figure 14: Employees Living with Disabilities



UNIVEN currently employs seven staff members with disabilities, representing 0.75% of the workforce, which is significantly below the 2% target (18 employees). To address this, the following interventions have been implemented to improve this representation:

- › A Disability Disclosure Session for employees, presented by the Department of Employment and Labour.
- › Disability disclosure awareness integrated into the HR induction programme.

Capacity Development

The following interventions were implemented to enhance staff capacity during the period under review:

Table 31: Capacity Development Initiatives

| Intervention | Description of the programme |
|----------------------------|--|
| Leadership programmes | <p>The following programmes were implemented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership Development Programme As part of UNIVEN's succession plan, this programme prepares senior managers for executive roles and promotes continuous improvement and innovation. Of the 25 Senior Management Committee participants, 12 were female and have all successfully completed the programme. 2. Management Development Programme This programme was offered to Heads of Department to strengthen management skills, enhance strategic planning, and improve decision-making. Its success is considered moderate, with 9 of the 25 participants being female, all of whom successfully completed the programme. 3. People and Programme Management This training focused on enhancing managerial skills in communication, conflict resolution, performance management, and employee engagement to build a more effective work environment. Success is moderate, with at least 14 participants completing the programme. 4. Project Management This training was aimed at equipping managers with key project planning and execution skills to improve resource management, meet deadlines, and achieve project goals. As recommended in the 2024 Performance Management Report, managers are encouraged to approach tasks as projects. Success is moderate, with at least 14 participants completing the training. |
| Young academics programmes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Postgraduate Certificate in Entrepreneurial Leadership for the Academics The programme aimed to develop entrepreneurial skills, enhance leadership capabilities and promote innovation in higher education, targeting academic staff. The programme recorded a higher success rate due to completion by all young academics, reflecting strong uptake and impact. 2. Qualitative Data Analysis using ATLAS.ti The ATLAS.ti software training aimed to equip academic staff with advanced skills in qualitative data analysis, promoting efficient data management, deeper insight generation, and higher research quality. The programme recorded a higher success rate due to completion by all young academics, reflecting strong uptake and impact. 3. New Generation of Academic Programme (nGAP) The University continued to support nGAP lecturers through structured induction for new appointments and a colloquium for those who had completed their PhDs. The success rate is considered moderate, with most lecturers progressing well, on track to complete their doctoral studies within six years, followed by three years of post-PhD practical experience, as required. |

Transforming Academic Project

The following can be reported regarding research in terms of transformation:

Table 32: Support for Women in Academia

| Interventions | No. of women beneficiaries | Achievements |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| The Directorate of Research and Innovation (DRI) targeted support to UNIVEN staff members pursuing master's and doctoral studies at South African higher education institutions | 36 | One graduate successfully completed their qualification |
| DRI workshops on article writing for University staff | 70 | 50% of female academics submitted to DHET-accredited journals |
| DRI workshops on supervision for University staff | 97 | Improved supervision skills among participants |
| DRI workshops on NRF Rating | 22 | 9 applications submitted for NRF rating |
| DRI support to potential candidates for promotion to professorial ranks | 1 | Candidate promoted to Associate Professor after completing the programme |
| UNIVEN awards to staff with the most research publications output | 3 | Recipients recognised at the Vice-Chancellor's Awards with a trophy and certificate |
| UNIVEN awards to staff with the highest number of master's and PhD graduates | 4 | 80% of awardees in this category were women at the 2024 Vice-Chancellor's Awards |
| UNIVEN awards NRF-rated staff | 11 | Recognised at the 2024 Vice-Chancellor's Awards with a certificate and research incentive |
| DRI research empowerment workshops for emerging researchers by Emeritus Professors, Adjunct Professors, and Research Fellows (special category) | 29 | Mentorship provided on systematic reviews to enhance research publication output |
| Research and Publication Committee: Publication funding support | 49 | Supported articles published in DHET-accredited journals |

Transformation activities on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)

The following interventions were implemented:

Table 33: GBVF Programme

| Date | Intervention/Programme | Target audience |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 19 March 2024 | GBV Awareness | Female students |
| 20 March 2024 | GBV Round Table Discussion | First-year female students |
| 06 May 2024 | Mental Health and GBV Awareness Session (Online) | All students |
| 13-14 June 2024 | SGBV Training Workshop | 150 student peer educators |
| 12 July 2024 | Kharibevele Dzwaini Campaign | All students |
| 02 August 2024 | GBV Awareness Session | Mvelaphanda female students |
| 19-22 August 2024 | Evening GBV Dialogue Sessions (on- and off-campus residences) | Students (956 students reached) |
| 22 August 2024 | GBV Awareness Session | Female staff members |
| 23 August 2024 | GBV Dialogue Session | All students |
| 30 August 2024 | Awareness Session on the Sexual Offences Amendment Act (2021) and its implications for PSET institutions | Students and staff (online) |

Improving the experience of the students living with disabilities

The Disability Unit has implemented a comprehensive range of support services to promote inclusive teaching, learning, research and community engagement for students with disabilities. First-year students were assessed for academic support eligibility and trained in the use of adapted technology to enhance their independence. All qualifying students were added to the Disability Unit database, with their information forwarded to NSFAS for funding. Orientation and mobility training, including outsourced services for blind students, was provided, and assistive devices such as adapted laptops, power scooters, and wheelchairs were loaned out.

The Unit ensured access to learning materials and assessments by modifying content received from lecturers and supplying research articles in preferred formats. Support was arranged for students with severe disabilities, with helpers vetted and linked to NSFAS for bursary payments. Additional academic and psychosocial support included tutoring through SCCUDU, life skills training, individual counselling, and library orientation. Tests were adapted through braille, enlarged print, or electronic formats, with invigilation and conducive exam environments provided. Examinations were efficiently coordinated, ensuring smooth operations and full participation by students registered with the Unit.

Conclusion

The University is committed to transformation through inclusive policies and practices in teaching, learning, research and community engagement. The University actively participates in national forums and works towards meeting employment equity targets, with a focus on increasing diversity and supporting underrepresented groups. Initiatives such as capacity development, support for women in academia, and services for students living with disabilities reflect the University’s dedication to creating an equitable and inclusive academic environment.



PROF NB NTHAMBELENI
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL



MR SB MAMPEULE
CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL



Annual Financial Review

2024 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

1. Foreword from the Chief Financial Officer

It is with great responsibility and pride that I present UNIVEN's 2024 Financial Overview. This report is more than a record of our financial outcomes — it reflects our resilience, accountability, and strategic drive toward long-term sustainability.

The higher education sector continues to face complex funding pressures, both locally and globally. In South Africa, government subsidies have not kept pace with inflation, while tuition fees remain tightly regulated. The 2024/25 to 2026/27 Ministerial Statement on University Funding requires institutions to curb overheads, improve debt recovery, collaborate to reduce costs, and generate alternative revenue streams. Finance divisions are now at the frontline of reimagining institutional sustainability.

For UNIVEN, where 75% of students rely on NSFAS, balancing affordability with financial health remains delicate. We are grateful to NSFAS and other critical funders such as BANKSETA, Funza Lushaka, the W&R SETA, MQA, and others for supporting access to higher education for low-income students.

Despite these challenges, 2024 marked a financial turning point. UNIVEN achieved over R2 billion in income for the first time, recovering from a R171 million deficit in 2023 to post a R210 million surplus, significantly surpassing our R112 million budget. This recovery was driven by improved grant utilisation, strategic cost controls, investment income, and enhanced digital processes.

Our 8% revenue growth was underpinned by strong performance in earmarked grants (up 39%), higher student enrolment, and investment returns that beat inflation. We also achieved a 10% reduction in total expenditure through strict cost management and improved collections.

The University has made significant strides in modernising its financial operations. Automated processes, from procurement to student payments, have boosted efficiency and transparency. Our focus on student financial support remains strong, with improved NSFAS collections, stronger private funding partnerships, and a notable decline in student debt.

Looking ahead, the continued decline in real-term block grants poses a risk to our financial sustainability. Yet we remain confident. Our goal of achieving R500 million in financial reserves by 2026 is within reach. We will continue investing in systems, people, and partnerships that build a resilient and future-ready institution.

I thank the Finance team, our colleagues across the University, and our funders and stakeholders for their unwavering support. Together, we are building a sustainable foundation for generations to come.

2. Executive summary

In 2024, the University recorded a significant financial turnaround, demonstrating resilience and disciplined financial management:

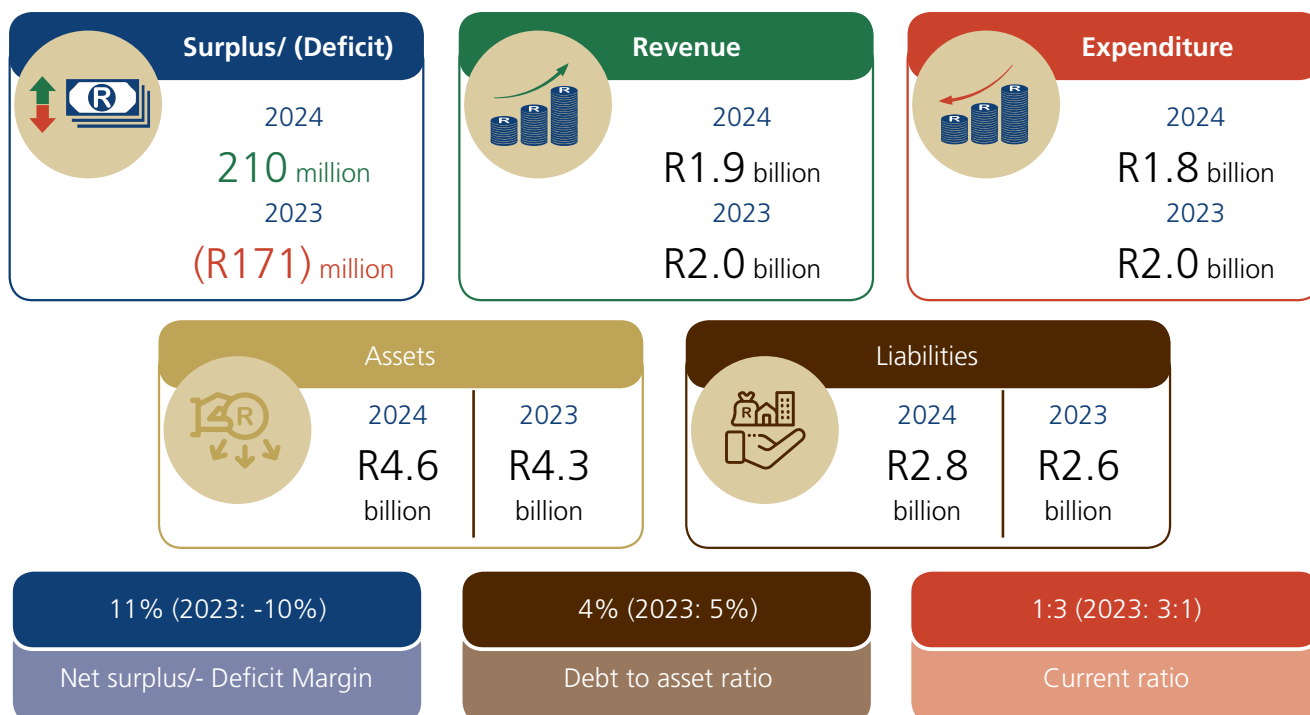
- › Revenue reached R2.0 billion, an 8% year-on-year increase, marking the highest in the University's history.
- › A budget surplus of R210 million was achieved, well above the projected R112 million, driven by improved income and expenditure control.
- › Expenditure dropped 10% year-on-year, reflecting focused cost containment and one-off impairments in 2023 that were not repeated.
- › Third-stream income increased by 9% to R259 million, maintaining its 13% share of total revenue.
- › Investment income rose 13% due to strategic portfolio diversification and enhanced treasury management.
- › Student debt declined by 13%, underpinned by better collections, NSFAS payments, and debt recovery initiatives.

On the operational front, digital transformation continued to accelerate. Automation across procurement, travel, student payments, and financial reporting contributed to faster decision-making and greater service efficiency. These improvements support our broader aim of becoming a more agile and financially sustainable institution.

UIGC Performance

In 2024, efforts to stabilise the subsidiary's performance reduced losses by 42%, from R7 million in 2023 to R4 million in the current year. The UIGC portfolio achieved unqualified audit outcomes in the 2024 financial year, which is a significant milestone in the turnaround of this business. The Barotta farming operation, however, is still in distress, and plans are in place to divest from this business. The Group will continue to monitor this progress in the coming year.

Financial status at a glance



3. Revenue and Expenditure Highlights

a. Revenue Performance

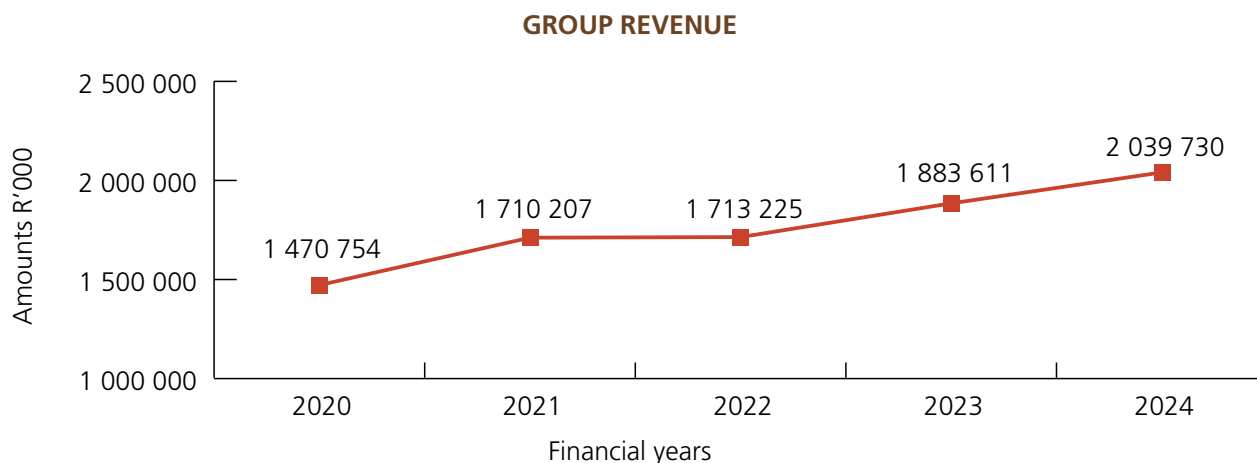


Figure 15: Group Revenue

Total revenue grew by 8%, driven by:

- › A 6% increase in grants and subsidies, including a R22 million rise in the block grant and 39% growth in earmarked grants.
- › A 12% increase in tuition and fees, supported by 3% enrolment growth and a 4.5% annual fee increase.
- › A 14% increase in investment income, supported by improved cash flow, diversified holdings, and higher yields from interest-bearing instruments.

Third-stream income (including consultancy, short courses, and facility rentals) grew to R259 million, meeting the 13% revenue contribution target.

b. Expenditure Performance

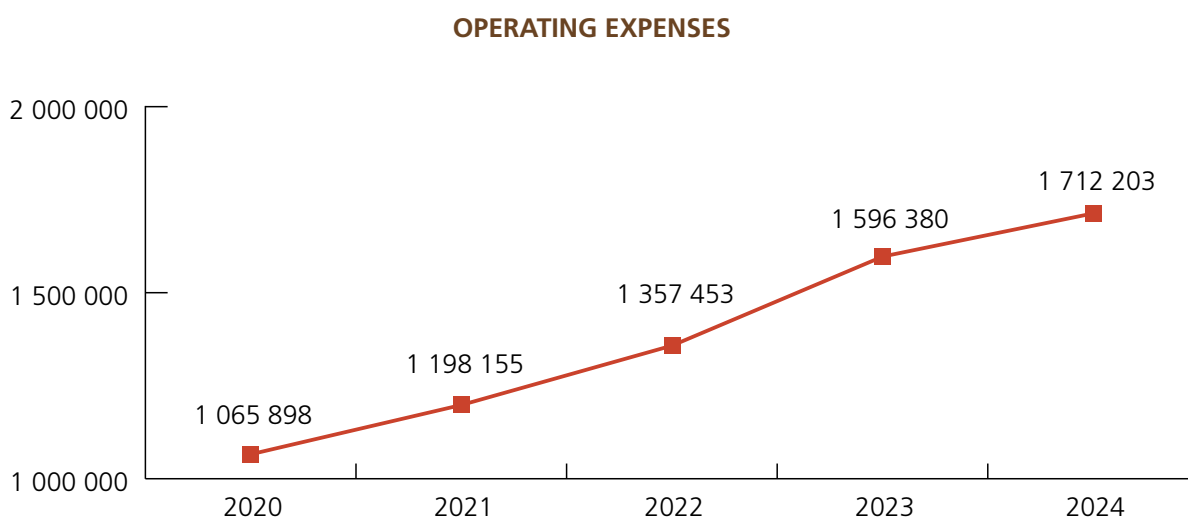


Figure 16: Group Expenses

Total expenditure declined 10% from R2.1 billion in 2023 to R1.8 billion in 2024, primarily due to:

- › The non-recurrence of R184 million in building impairments recorded in 2023.
- › A R25 million reversal in expected credit losses due to better student debt collections.
- › Stringent cost controls, aligned with ministerial directives.

However, personnel costs rose by 10%, primarily due to an increase in headcount and a 6% inflationary salary adjustment. ICT expenses also increased significantly as part of the University's smart campus strategy.

4. Financial Position Overview

Table 34: Group Financial Position Summary

| Indicator | 2023 | 2024 | % Change |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|
| Total Assets | R4.3 billion | R4.6 billion | ↑ 8% |
| Property, Plant & Equipment | R2.0 billion | R2.2 billion | ↑ 13% |
| Investments | R1.8 billion | R1.4 billion | ↓ 19% |
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | R210.5 million | R646.4 million | ↑ 207% |
| Trade & Other Receivables | R301.8 million | R294.7 million | ↓ 2% |
| Trade & Other Payables | R488.7 million | R590.5 million | ↑ 21% |
| Borrowings | R213.4 million | R196.5 million | ↓ 9% |
| Equity | R1.6 billion | R1.8 billion | ↑ 12% |

The University's financial position improved significantly in 2024, with an 8% increase in total assets year-on-year. This reflects sound capital investment, strategic asset management, and prudent financial planning. The University is steadily building a more resilient balance sheet capable of withstanding external funding shocks and supporting long-term sustainability goals.

Assets

Total assets rose to over R4.6 billion, driven primarily by:

- › **Property, plant and equipment (PPE)** increased by R250 million (13%) to R2.2 billion. This reflects major investments in physical and digital infrastructure, including equipment, furniture, vehicles, and ICT upgrades. Notably, the Makhado Local Municipality donated land worth R18 million, creating new strategic opportunities for expansion. A property was also acquired in Pretoria to strengthen the Advancement Unit's fundraising capacity.
- › **A change in accounting policy**, from the revaluation model to the cost model reduced depreciation charges and improved asset value consistency. This change was applied retrospectively and is expected to stabilise long-term asset reporting.
- › **Investments** stood at R1.4 billion, a strategic accumulation in line with the University's reserve-building objective of R500 million by 2026. Although lower than in 2023, this is attributed to cyclical liquidity timing, rather than underperformance.
- › **Cash and cash equivalents** rebounded by 207% to R646 million, recovering from a low base in 2023 (R210 million). Improved collections, prudent liquidity management, and timing of earmarked grant spending contributed to the recovery.

- › **Trade and other receivables** declined marginally by 2%, reflecting the early impact of strengthened debt collection strategies and reduced exposure to student debt.

Liabilities

Total liabilities increased by 5%, reflecting operational and timing factors:

- › Trade and other payables rose by 21% (R102 million), largely due to year-end accruals and a R54 million increase in bursary creditors. This increase in bursary-related liabilities stems from administrative timing differences among multiple stakeholders in the student funding ecosystem.
- › The University has begun implementing stronger coordination protocols with funders to better align disbursement schedules with verified enrolment and eligibility data, which is expected to reduce future accumulations of bursary-related payables.
- › Retirement benefit obligations increased by 18%, driven by medical aid inflation and actuarial adjustments. This trend is unsustainable in the long term, and the University is currently exploring risk mitigation strategies, including restructuring of funds and recalibration of contributions.
- › Borrowings declined by 8% to R196 million, reflecting regular loan repayments and effective debt management. No new external debt was raised during the year.

Equity and Reserves

Equity increased by 12% to R1.8 billion, representing a strong recovery from the declines in 2022–2023. The previous years' contractions were due to a change in accounting policy on fixed assets, which reversed revaluation surpluses. The 2024 surplus of R210 million contributed to rebuilding equity, signalling the University's financial recovery and reinforcing its sustainability credentials.

The University's long-term strategy focuses on maintaining equity growth through responsible surpluses, capital preservation, and reinvestment in mission-critical infrastructure and student support services.

5. Cash Flow Overview

The University's cash flow position in 2024 demonstrates sustained operational strength and effective financial management. Operating, investing, and financing activities were strategically managed to ensure liquidity, support capital investments, and maintain institutional stability.

Operating Activities

In 2024, the University generated R302 million in cash from operations, compared to R312 million in 2023. This consistency underscores the financial health of the core academic and administrative operations. Operating cash flows were supported by improved student debt recovery, higher grant utilisation, and tight cost control.

Investing Activities

Investing cash flows reflect an active capital investment programme aligned with strategic growth:

- › In 2024, the University invested R318 million in PPE, down from R414 million in 2023.
- › Investments included infrastructure upgrades, ICT equipment, and digital platforms to support teaching, learning, and administration.
- › The University also executed significant financial asset transactions, including:
 - › R1.0 billion in unit trust purchases

- › Additional repositioning of unlisted assets and other investment instruments

While 2023 reflected net investing outflows (R552 million), the University reported net investing inflows of R181 million in 2024. This reversal reflects both the maturity of prior investments and the strategic reallocation of cash in response to market opportunities.

Financing Activities

Financing cash flows remained stable and conservative:

- › The University continued servicing its debt, including:
 - › Loan repayments of R16.9 million
 - › Lease payments of approximately R2.3–R2.5 million
- › No new debt was incurred in 2024, consistent with the University's commitment to maintain manageable leverage levels and preserve financial independence.

Liquidity Position

The University significantly improved its liquidity:

- › Cash and cash equivalents increased from R210 million in 2023 to R646 million in 2024, a growth of 207%.
- › This strong liquidity cushion supports operational flexibility, risk management, and investment capability.

6. Key Ratios

Table 35: Group Key Ratios

| Group Ratios | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Revenue growth | -5% | 16% | 0% | 10% | 8% |
| State subsidies to revenue | 62% | 53% | 52% | 51% | 53% |
| Tuition fees to revenue | 31% | 39% | 37% | 36% | 40% |
| Expense growth | -8% | 18% | -7% | 46% | -10% |
| Personnel to revenue | 50% | 46% | 50% | 51% | 56% |
| Personnel to expenditure | 57% | 52% | 61% | 47% | 59% |
| Return on cash and investments | 3% | 3% | 5% | 7% | 9% |
| Equity growth | 7% | 10% | -16% | -9% | 12% |

The University experienced volatile growth patterns: a 5% decline in 2020 due to the pandemic, followed by a strong rebound with 16% growth in 2021, stagnation in 2022 (0%), and steady growth of 10% and 8% in 2023 and 2024. This demonstrates recovery and stabilisation after the initial COVID-19 disruption.

The University has also undergone a strategic shift in its funding composition. State subsidies as a percentage of revenue declined consistently from 62% in 2020 to 50% in 2024, indicating reduced government dependency. At the same time, tuition fees grew from 31% to 37% of revenue, demonstrating successful diversification toward fee-based income streams.

Expense management exhibited significant variability, with an 8% decline in 2020, an 18% surge in 2021, a 7% contraction in 2022, a 46% spike in 2023, and a 10% decline in 2024. The 2023 spike reflects significant impairments in both PPE and student debt, followed by effective cost control in 2024.

Personnel costs as a percentage of revenue remained relatively stable (50–52%), indicating consistent staffing relative to income. However, personnel as a percentage of total expenditure fluctuated significantly (47–61%), reflecting varying levels of non-personnel spending, particularly the 2023 spike in other expenses.

The return on cash and investments showed consistent improvement, increasing from 3% in 2020–2021 to 8% in 2024. This demonstrates increasingly effective treasury management and investment strategy optimisation.

Equity growth was positive in most years (7–12%), but contracted in 2022 (-16%) and 2023 (-9%), primarily due to the change in accounting policy for property, plant, and equipment, from the revaluation model to the cost model. The recovery to 12% growth in 2024 indicates a strengthened financial position.

7. Revenue and Financial Aid

The Revenue and Financial Aid (RFA) Department plays a central role in strengthening the University's financial sustainability by managing income streams, student funding, collections, and strategic investments. Its core functions include:

- › Cash flow and investment management
- › Bursary and scholarship administration
- › Student finance and invoicing
- › Debt collection and credit control

In 2024, the department made significant strides in improving cash flow, growing its reserves, and enhancing access to higher education.

Strategic Investment Growth

To reduce its reliance on state funding, the University continued to implement its long-term investment strategy, launched in 2021. The strategy focuses on building financial independence through income-generating assets.

- › The University's long-term investments grew from R30 million in 2022 to R271 million in 2024, keeping it on track to meet the R500 million target by 2026.
- › Total investment portfolios (excluding earmarked funds) decreased by 22%, from R1.8 billion in 2023 to R1.4 billion in 2024, as more cash was retained in current accounts.
- › Investment income increased by 13%, driven by improved liquidity management and portfolio diversification across fixed deposits, unit trusts, equities, and call accounts.

These outcomes demonstrate the effective execution of the University's Investment Policy and its alignment with long-term sustainability objectives.

Student Debt Collection

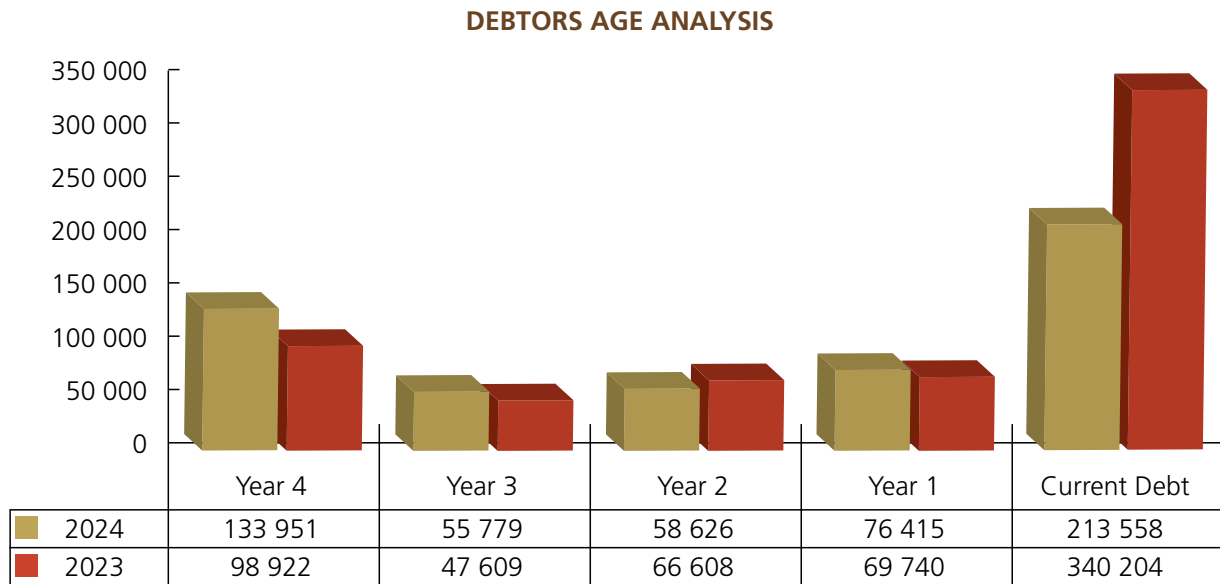


Figure 17: Debtors' Age Analysis

Improving debt recovery remained a priority in 2024, and several high-impact interventions were implemented:

- › A dedicated student debt collection strategy was rolled out, supported by the appointment of two professional debt collection agencies.
- › These agencies collected an average of R1 million per month, providing a steady inflow to support operations.
- › Additional recovery tools included:
 - › Acknowledgement of debt (AOD) agreements (R11.1 million)
 - › Voluntary payroll deductions
 - › Settlement discount arrangements

Thanks to these efforts and better NSFAS payment cycles, student debt declined by 13%, from R618 million to R538 million, with R300 million (56%) related to legacy debt from prior years. The RFA's proactive approach prioritises long-term debt recovery over write-offs, thereby preserving the University's financial base while maintaining access.

Student Funding Growth

In 2024, the University recorded significant growth in the number of funded students:

- › Funded students rose by 2,145, driven by successful NSFAS appeal processes and greater support from private funders.
- › This represents a 14% increase in funded students, compared to a 3% rise in total enrolment, indicating improved funding coverage.
- › Private funding increased by 74%, while government funding declined by 4% over the same period.

This shift reflects the importance of diversifying the funding base beyond NSFAS. It underscores the need for ongoing efforts to maintain academic performance, as private funders typically require a 65% pass rate, higher than the 50% threshold for NSFAS support.

FUNDING STATUS

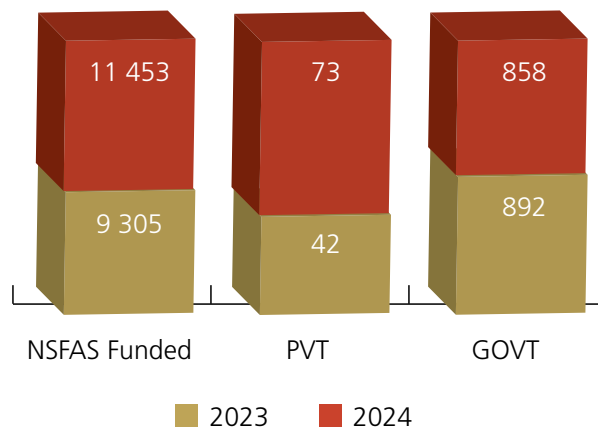


Figure 18: Funding Status

In 2024, contributions from our top five funders grew by 10% compared to 2023. However, the continued decline in government-funded students presents a challenge, largely due to stricter academic performance thresholds. Maintaining and improving student pass rates remains critical to sustaining and expanding funding from both private and public sources.

Outlook and Priorities

Looking ahead, the RFA Department will:

- › Expand partnerships with private funders to reduce dependency on state support.
- › Finalise the rollout of DebiCheck for automated monthly student repayments.
- › Strengthen bursary contract compliance and performance monitoring.
- › Monitor NSFAS policy shifts to ensure early response and institutional readiness.

Through a balanced approach that combines financial innovation with student support, the RFA is helping to secure the University's financial future while expanding access to higher education.

8. Supply Chain Management and Expenditure Department

The Supply Chain Management (SCM) and Expenditure Department is central to ensuring that the University procures goods and services efficiently, transparently, and in line with financial governance standards. In 2024, the department made significant progress in advancing its transformation agenda, strengthening compliance, and enhancing its contribution to local economic development.

Procurement Modernisation

Key procurement processes were automated to drive efficiency, transparency, and auditability:

- › **Online Tender Box:** The University implemented an electronic procurement system aligned with SANS 10845 standards. This platform enables secure tender publication, submission, communication, and outcome notifications—all digitally managed.

- › **Contract Management System:** Contracts and framework agreements are now stored and tracked digitally. The new system enhances compliance monitoring, reduces off-contract spend, and improves reporting on supplier performance.
- › **Travel Management System (TMS):** UNIVEN adopted a digital platform to centralise bookings, enforce travel policies, reduce costs, and improve visibility over travel expenditure. Key benefits include:
 - › Real-time analytics and compliance tracking
 - › Mobile self-booking functionality for staff
 - › Better cost control and vendor management

Strategic Sourcing and Cost Optimisation

The SCM unit implemented sourcing strategies aimed at value creation, not just cost reduction:

- › Supplier consolidation and volume-based negotiations yielded better contract terms and procurement savings.
- › The department shifted toward total value optimisation, improving quality, delivery times, and supplier relationships while maintaining competitiveness.

To further diversify the supplier base and support transformation, the University hosted its first Supplier Connect Day:

- › 400+ delegates from 250 companies participated.
- › 159 SMMEs received training in financial management, tendering, compliance, and stakeholder engagement.
- › Engagements were held with key partners, including SARS, ABSA, LEDA, PURCO SA, and others.
- › Focus topics included green procurement, ethical sourcing, and building intelligent supply chains.

Asset Disposal and Innovation

In partnership with ICT, the department successfully launched its first electronic internal auction to dispose of redundant assets. The auction was conducted digitally, showcasing the University's commitment to transparency and efficiency in managing surplus items.

Table 36: SCM Key Achievements

| Initiative | Outcome |
|------------------------------|---|
| Digital Tender Platform | 100% digitised tender lifecycle with full audit trail |
| Contract Register Automation | Improved contract monitoring and reduced risk |
| Travel Management System | Cost control, compliance, and staff self-service adoption |
| Supplier Connect Day | 400+ delegates; 159 SMMEs trained; expanded supplier base |
| Internal Asset Auction | First electronic auction for redundant asset disposal |

The SCM and Expenditure Department continues to evolve into a strategic partner in delivering value, driving efficiency, and supporting the University's financial sustainability.

9. Financial Management and Reporting Department

The Financial Management and Reporting (FMR) Department ensures that the University maintains strong financial governance, produces reliable reporting, and aligns its financial planning with institutional priorities. In 2024, the department deepened its Finance Business Partnering model, modernised reporting, and reinforced budget accountability.

Strategic Budgeting and Financial Planning

The 2025 budget was prepared using a hybrid approach that integrated:

- › Zero-based budgeting for cost justification
- › Activity-based budgeting to align with operational plans
- › Incremental budgeting to support continuity

Key assumptions included anticipated enrolment, grant allocations, inflation forecasts, staffing adjustments, and infrastructure plans. The process was fully digitised through a budgeting tool, enabling departments to input budgets directly and allowing for real-time consolidation and scenario analysis. This led to greater transparency, cross-functional alignment, and evidence-based resource allocation.

Governance and Policy Development

The FMR team updated and implemented several governance tools:

- › A new Budget and Advance Policy
- › Five updated procedural manuals, including cost-efficiency guidelines
- › Controls to support responsible spending and stimulate local economic development, in line with the University Town concept

For example, 56% of the R20 million spent on student accommodation was directed to providers in the Vhembe District—an increase of 614% from pre-efficiency levels.

Financial Reporting and Audit

- › The University once again achieved an unqualified audit opinion for the 2024 financial year, the seventh consecutive year.
- › The Audit Action Plan resulted in the resolution of 88 out of 97 historical audit findings. Of the 12 findings raised in 2023, 10 had been resolved by December 2024.

Remaining findings relate to:

- › Land registration (2)
- › NSFAS compliance (1)
- › Foundation Trust dissolution (1)
- › Grant condition non-compliance (1)

The Executive Management Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, and Council actively monitor these.

Talent Development and Capacity Building

FMR invested in its people to ensure sustainable performance:

- › Three interns were onboarded and actively contributed to reporting and analysis functions.
- › Four employees completed advanced **financial modelling training**, improving data-driven planning.
- › An additional Chartered Accountant (CA(SA)) joined the team, strengthening technical capability.
- › The majority of staff are enrolled in further academic or professional studies, aligned with UNIVEN's talent development goals.

Table 37: FMR Key Achievements

| Area | Outcome |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Budgeting | Hybrid model via IDU; improved accuracy and ownership |
| Audit Outcome | Seventh consecutive unqualified opinion |
| Audit Findings | 91% of findings resolved over five years; strong monitoring and governance |
| Economic Development Impact | 614% increase in local accommodation spend |
| Talent Development | New CA(SA); interns onboarded; advanced training completed |

10. Conclusion and Strategic Outlook

The 2024 financial year marked a decisive shift for UNIVEN—from recovery to renewed resilience. Following years of fiscal constraint and uncertainty, the University has restored stability, strengthened operational discipline, and laid the foundations for long-term sustainability.

A strong surplus, increased reserves, reduced debt, and improved liquidity signal not only sound financial management but also strategic foresight. The modernisation of financial systems, growth in third-stream income, and effective debt recovery demonstrate the University's capacity to adapt within an evolving and often constrained higher education landscape.

However, structural risks persist:

- › The real-term decline in block grants, driven by static funding formulas and inflation.
- › Rising personnel costs, especially in the context of post-COVID workload models.
- › NSFAS funding volatility, including delayed disbursements and eligibility changes.
- › Growing pressure on ICT and infrastructure, critical to achieving academic excellence and student satisfaction.

To navigate these challenges, the Finance Division will prioritise:

1. Sustaining operational efficiency through cost control, digitisation, and performance monitoring.
2. Reaching R500 million in institutional reserves by 2026 to protect against external shocks.
3. Enhancing third-stream income through commercialisation, fundraising, and donor engagement.
4. Deepening financial literacy across academic and support units through the Finance Business Partner model.
5. Improving reporting and governance to maintain clean audits and stakeholder confidence.
6. Strengthening risk management by proactively addressing funding, liquidity, and compliance risks.

The University remains committed to a mission that extends beyond financial indicators: expanding access, enabling student success, and transforming society. Our financial strategy must support this mission by ensuring that every rand is deployed efficiently, ethically, and in service of academic excellence and social impact.

We would like to thank all staff, partners, funders, and stakeholders for their ongoing support. Together, we will build a future-ready, financially sustainable University that consistently delivers on its promise to students and communities alike.



MR LB KRAZIYA

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