



Aligning with Global Standards to Transform Internal Audit



In a decisive move to strengthen governance, accountability, and institutional performance, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) convened a high-level Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) Workshop on 17 April 2026 at the Protea Fire and Ice Hotel in Pretoria.

Bringing together members of the Audit Committee, Executive Management Committee, and Senior Management Committee, the workshop marked a critical step in aligning the University's internal audit function with evolving global standards and best practices. The initiative was informed by a recent gap analysis, which highlighted the need to deepen stakeholders' understanding of their roles in governance and internal auditing, and to enhance the institution's readiness to implement the new standards effectively.



Ms Zanele Nkosi, Chairperson of the Audit Committee, in her opening remarks, highlighted the transformation of internal audit into a strategic partner, essential to the university's sustainability and value creation.

She emphasised the need for a proactive, solution-driven approach that anticipates risks and external challenges while shaping the institutional environment. She noted that strengthening this role depends on collective support, collaboration, and a shared understanding among leadership and governance structures. Commending strong workshop participation, she encouraged alignment with global audit standards and active contribution to internal audit surveys to drive continuous improvement and enhance the function's strategic impact.



Facilitated by internal audit expert, Mr Marthin Grobler, the workshop unpacked the strategic importance of internal auditing as a cornerstone of good governance, emphasising its role not merely as a compliance function, but as a vital partner in enabling the University to create, protect, and sustain value. Participants engaged with critical concepts such as the Three Lines Model and combined assurance, exploring how gaps, overlaps, and blurred responsibilities can weaken oversight and dilute accountability. The sessions challenged leaders to reflect candidly on whether their systems deliver genuine assurance or simply the comfort of reporting, reinforcing the need for coordinated, risk-based assurance that drives informed decision-making and organisational resilience.

Central to the discussions was the introduction of the Global Internal Audit Standards, which replace the previous international framework and set a higher benchmark for internal audit effectiveness. The focus was placed on governance of the internal audit function, highlighting the importance of independence, board oversight, and strategic alignment.

The workshop underscored that an effective internal audit function depends on a strong partnership between the board, senior management, and

internal auditors, supported by clear mandates, adequate resources, and a culture of integrity and accountability.

The programme also contextualised internal auditing within the King V governance framework, demonstrating how assurance, risk management, compliance, and technology governance must work in an integrated manner to achieve ethical culture, performance, and legitimacy. Through practical governance touchpoints, participants examined key instruments such as the internal audit charter, audit plans, and quality assurance processes, with a focus on ensuring that internal audit remains responsive to emerging risks and organisational priorities.

A highlight of the workshop was the interactive roundtable discussions, where participants moved from theory to practice, identifying assurance gaps, assessing audit quality, and proposing actionable improvements to strengthen oversight. These engagements reinforced a central message: effective governance is not achieved through structures alone, but through active, informed, and challenging leadership that demands accountability and drives continuous improvement.



In his closing remarks, the Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

By the close of the session, the workshop had achieved its core objective, to build a shared understanding of roles, enhance oversight capabilities, and position UNIVEN to fully align with the Global Internal Audit Standards. More importantly, it signalled the University's commitment to embedding a robust assurance culture that not only meets compliance requirements but actively contributes to institutional excellence and public trust.



During Roundtable discussions

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University of Venda Participates in the DSBD Sector-Focused and Hybrid Incubation and Digital Hub Support Strategy

The Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation team recently participated in the Sector-focused and Hybrid Incubation and Digital Hub Support Strategy Outreach and Awareness Workshop hosted by the Department of Small Business Development in partnership with the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, and the University of Limpopo Digital Hub at the University of Limpopo.



In the picture: Mr Mohotolo Mojalefa, Chief Director, Department of Small Business Development, giving welcome remarks

Mr Mohotolo Mojalefa, Chief Director, Department of Small Business Development, welcomed the participants to the workshop and highlighted that the workshop aimed to foster dialogue and collaboration among public and private stakeholders, academia, and civil society.

The mandate of the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) is to lead and coordinate an integrated approach to the promotion and development of entrepreneurship, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and Co-operatives. In doing so, an enabling environment should be forged through policy intents and strategic interventions that support the development, growth, and sustainability of MSMEs and Co-operatives.

The Sector-focused and Hybrid Incubation and Digital Hub Support Strategy (SHIDHSS) reflects the DSBD approach in enhancing incubation support for MSMEs and Co-operatives.

Mr Mashudu Netshishwinzhe, Deputy Director Digital Hub and Incubator Support, Department of Small Business Development, presented on the Sector-Focused and Hybrid Incubation and Digital Hub Support Strategy (SHIDHSS).

He stated that the DSBD has identified the need for SHIDHSS to improve government efforts around the delivery of incubation support to MSMEs and Co-operatives.



In the picture: Mr Donald Morema, Manager, Economic Activation

As an intervention, Business Incubation (BI) is a cornerstone for addressing challenges amongst MSMEs and Co-operatives in terms of development and growth. The SHIDHSS is a blueprint that offers strategic guidance and activates a momentum towards the attainment of strategic goals in addressing challenges experienced and observed in the

development and support of MSMEs and Co-operatives, Mr. Netshishwinzhe said.

He further shared with the participants the types of incubation centres supported by the department, including type 1 - Digital Hub, type 2 - Incubators, and type 3 - Accelerators.

The Department also supports Physical and Virtual incubation models, such as facilities for co-working, whereby small businesses can work alongside each other and tap into the expertise of in-residence entrepreneurs, and an online incubation programme designed to support incubates with business development offered through online platforms with little or no physical contact.

The workshop provided the University of Venda with an opportunity to showcase its programme and project, advancing its drive to become an entrepreneurial university.

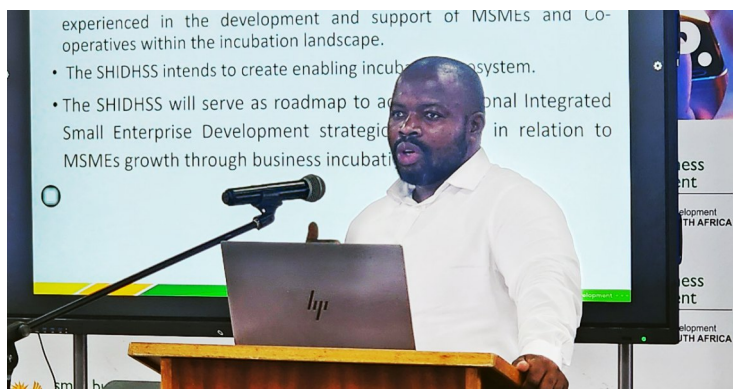
Mr. Donald Morema, Manager, Economic Activation Office, shared insights on the University of Venda's approaches to fostering

innovation, entrepreneurship, and enterprise development under the topic "University of Venda Strategic Interventions for Advancing Innovation and Enterprise Development."

Mr. Donald Morema highlights that UNIVEN's intervention to advance entrepreneurship is embedded in the University's strategy 2026-2030 through Strategic Thrust number two: Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, yielding to key outcome six: Entrepreneurial University. The University of Venda's strategic plan mandates that it become a leading entrepreneurial engaged university in the country.

The mandate is driven by the Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation, in partnership with the faculties, the broader internal ecosystem, and external stakeholders, transforming knowledge into real economic impact for the Vhembe region and beyond, Mr Morema said.

Mr. Morema also shared that the directorate is advancing the University's entrepreneurial agenda through its operational units and student networks, such as the Entrepreneurial Student Ambassador Program (ESAP).



In the picture: Mr. Mashudu Netshishwinzhe, Deputy Director, DSBD, presenting the SHIDHSS



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UNIVEN and PPS Deliver Hope and Dignity Through Student Welfare Partnership

On 21 April 2026, the University of Venda (UNIVEN), through its Advancement Unit, partnered with the Professionals Provident Society (PPS) to support the Thoho Ya Nzie Student Welfare Programme through the donation of food parcels. The initiative reinforces the University's commitment to student wellness, dignity, and academic success, particularly amid rising living costs that threaten student retention.



Dr Caroline Takalani welcomed guests and expressed appreciation to the PPS Foundation for its continued support, while acknowledging the Advancement Unit's fundraising efforts. She emphasised that academic success is inseparable from students' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, and highlighted the importance of holistic, student-centred support systems.

In her keynote address, Ms Tsakani Nkuna described the PPS Foundation's contribution as a strategic investment in student resilience and well-being.

She noted that the programme enhances academic focus, emotional stability, and social solidarity, while also stressing that food insecurity is a global challenge. She further highlighted the value of purposeful collaboration in driving meaningful social impact.

Dr Refilwe Pila Nemutandani reaffirmed the Thoho Ya Nzie Programme as a reflection of UNIVEN's commitment to student-centred development and called on industry partners, alumni, and stakeholders to support and expand the initiative.

Providing an overview of PPS, Mr Kapish Singh outlined the organisation's history and its focus on youth development. He commended UNIVEN's proactive efforts in supporting students and highlighted the role of partnerships, including collaboration with Rise Against Hunger Africa, in addressing food insecurity.

He reaffirmed the PPS Foundation's commitment to strengthening its partnership with the University.

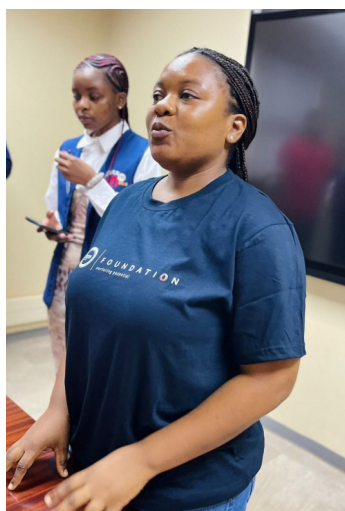
In his appreciation remarks, Dr Takalani Dzaga, Director Marketing, Branding and Communi-

cation, thanked all stakeholders for their contributions and underscored the importance of sustainable partnerships.

He highlighted the significance of PPS Foundation's renewed support in advancing UNIVEN's flagship student welfare initiatives and strengthening its developmental mandate as a rural-based institution.

Delivering the vote of thanks, Mr Andisani Mathelemusa expressed gratitude to the PPS Foundation and all stakeholders, noting the importance of collective support in addressing students' socio-economic challenges.

He emphasised that such interventions restore dignity and called for continued partnerships to enhance student welfare and institutional development.



Above are the speakers during the Thoho Ya Nzie Student Welfare Programme



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Directorate of Research and Innovation Organises a Workshop on Research Supervision for Staff

On a crisp autumn morning of 22 April 2026, more than just another date on the academic calendar, it became a moment of reflection, renewal, and transformation. At the elegant 2Ten Hotel, a gathering of scholars convened under the auspices of the Directorate of Research and Innovation, united by a shared purpose of strengthening the art and science of postgraduate supervision at the University of Venda (UNIVEN). The atmosphere carried a sense of intent. Conversations were thoughtful, measured, and purposeful, an indication that this was no ordinary workshop, but rather a deliberate effort to reshape the foundations of academic mentorship.



Group of attendees



Mr Khathutshelo Mashavhathakha, Postgraduate Officer from the Directorate of Research and Innovation, University of Venda

Mr Mashavhathakha opened the proceedings with the University's Vision 2040, a framework rooted in student-centredness and challenged research supervisors to reconsider the entire postgraduate journey, from admission to graduation.

His emphasis on meaningful feedback lingered in the room. Supervision, he suggested, was not a transactional obligation but a developmental partnership, one that required clarity, commitment and ethical responsibility.



Prof Michael Chimonyo, Research Professor in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, University of Venda

As the morning unfolded, Prof Michael Chimonyo deepened the discourse with a firm and instructive tone. Prof Chimonyo underscored the undeniable link between supervision quality and research outcomes.

According to him, supervision is about intellectual engagement, planning, guiding, analysing, and refining. He told attendees that supervision demands availability, discipline, and intellectual leadership.



Emeritus Professor, Azwidohwi Kutame, Director of the School of Education, University of Venda

Prof Azwidohwi Kutame offered a more nuanced perspective. He invited participants to examine roles often taken for granted, coaching, mentoring, and supervising. He described coaching as immediate and task-focused, mentoring as enduring and developmental, and supervision as structured and goal-oriented. Yet, he noted that these roles frequently overlap, and when misunderstood, can lead to confusion or dependency. His insight encouraged a more conscious, intentional approach, one where supervisors recognise not only what they do, but how and why they do it.



Professor Ntakadzeni Madala from the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, University of Venda

Prof Ntakadzeni Madala's contribution shifted the room from theory to strategy. Drawing from experience, he spoke candidly about the realities of supervision in demanding academic environments. He challenged the notion of solitary supervision, proposing instead collaborative models that distribute responsibility and enhance capacity. Prof Madala described group supervision as a collective effort, an intellectual community

More striking was his advocacy for cohort supervision. In this model, students learn, conduct research, and thus progress together. They share milestones, support one another, and, perhaps most importantly, hold each other accountable.

There was a quiet recognition in the room as he explained its effectiveness. When students advance together, progress becomes visible, and so does stagnation. This shared journey fosters a subtle but powerful motivation: no one wishes to be left behind. It is not pressure imposed by authority, but encouragement emerging from within the group. Professor Madala's reflections took a more introspective turn as he concluded. He spoke, almost pastorally, about academic integrity and self-awareness. His message was unambiguous: those who lack the competence or integrity required for supervision should reconsider their roles. It was a moment of stillness, one that invited honest self-reflection rather than outward critique.



Dr Prins Nevhutalu, Advisor to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, University of Venda

During the question-and-answer session, Dr Prins Nevhutalu's voice added resonance to the discussion. He echoed the importance of structured and collaborative supervision, reinforcing the value of group and cohort models. His remarks affirmed a collective understanding emerging throughout the day, that effective supervision is not accidental, but intentional, designed, supported, and continuously refined.

As the workshop drew to a close, there was only a quiet sense of clarity. What had unfolded was not simply a series of presentations, but a shared rethinking of responsibility. It became evident that supervision is not merely about guiding students or candidates in research. It is about shaping scholars, sustaining integrity, and building the future.



Attendees during workshop proceedings



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A New Era of Impact: UNIVEN Launches UGO Student Chapter and Fellowship Cohort



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) successfully launched the UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter and the UGO Fellowship 2026 cohort on Tuesday, 14 April 2026, at the University's Sports Hall.

The event, attended by more than 300 students and stakeholders, filled the venue to its capacity and marked a significant milestone in advancing student leadership, innovation, and community engagement. The purpose of the event was to introduce a dynamic platform that equips students with practical skills, leadership experience, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to society.



*Prof Bernard Nthambeleni,
UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal*

In his address to launch the UNIVEN – UGO Student Chapter and UGO Fellowship 2026 Cohort, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni underscored that the launch of the Universal Greening Organisation (UGO) Student Chapter at the University of Venda is both symbolic and transformative, reflecting the institution's role as a birthplace of ideas, leadership, and societal change.

He highlighted the University's commitment to producing graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive, particularly in the context of Africa's pressing challenges such as climate change, youth unemployment, and inequality. Emphasising the call by President Cyril Ramaphosa for universities to function as engines of development, he described the student chapter as a dynamic platform that moves learning beyond theory into practical, community-driven impact, equipping students with critical leadership and innovation skills. He further noted that such initiatives bridge the gap between the University and society, foster entrepreneurship, and align with continental aspirations, such as the African Union Agenda 2063.

He reaffirmed the University's full support for the initiative, officially launching both the UGO Student Chapter and the 2026 Fellowship cohort, and calling on students to seize this opportunity to lead, innovate, and drive sustainable development across the continent, led by a newly appointed student leadership team comprising President Rivonia Boitumelo Mashatola, Deputy President Theodore Tshivhinda, Secretary General Lusani Phophi, Deputy Secretary General Konanani Rasimphi, Treasurer General Vhulenda Negota, and Project Coordinator Muvhulawa Musutha.



Executive Committee of UNIVEN – UGO Student Chapter

Top row: Deputy President Theodore Tshivhinda, Treasurer General Vhulenda Negota and Projects Co-ordinator Muvhulawa Masutha

Bottom row: Deputy Secretary General Konani Rasimphi, Secretary General Lusani Phophi and President Boitumelo Mashatola

Delivering the opening and welcome remarks, Professor Vhonani Netshandama highlighted the University's strong commitment to developing both current and future leaders. She encouraged students to embrace experiential learning beyond the classroom and actively participate in initiatives that foster innovation, leadership, and community impact.



*Mr Talifhani Tshitwamulomoni, Founder and Executive
Chairman of the Universal Greening Organisation*

This was followed by the official launch of the UGO Fellowship 2026 by Mr Talifhani Tshitwamulomoni, Founder and Executive Chairman of the Universal Greening Organisation (UGO). Mr Tshitwamulomoni informed the students that the call for applications for the Fellowship 2026 cohort is open from 14 April 2026 and will close on 14 May 2026. He described the fellowship as a transformative platform that bridges the gap between theory and practice through community engagement, mentorship, and applied research. Reflecting on UGO's origins as a student-led initiative, he highlighted its growth into a globally recognised organisation and encouraged students to seize the opportunity to become change-makers capable of driving both local and international impact.

Messages of support from key stakeholders underscored the initiative's significance in advancing youth empowerment, skills development, and environmental sustainability. These included representatives from Thulamela Local Municipality, led by Mayor Cllr Sarah Rambuda; the UNIVEN Convocation Executive Committee, represented by Shonisani Masutha; and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), represented by Mr Mahlodi

Tau, Chief Director for Biodiversity Information and Policy Advice.

Speakers commended the strong collaboration among UNIVEN, UGO, and their partners, highlighting the importance of creating opportunities that bridge education with real-world challenges and encourage students to play an active role in their communities.



*Theodore Tshivhinda,
UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter Deputy President*

Representing the UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter, the Deputy President, Theodore Tshivhinda, described the chapter as a critical bridge between students and industry, providing opportunities for skills development, leadership exposure, and environmental stewardship.

Students were encouraged to join the initiative and take part in programmes that prepare them to be globally competitive and socially responsible graduates.

In his remarks, Thovhele Kenedy Tshivhase emphasised that the launch symbolises a bold commitment to shaping the future through youth leadership and action.

He urged students to take initiative, embrace responsibility, and become agents of change, highlighting the importance of collaboration in producing graduates who are impactful and solution-driven.

Closing the programme, Professor Eric Maluta, expressed appreciation to all stakeholders for their contributions to the successful event. He encouraged students to take full advantage of fellowship opportunities, utilise the resources available through the student chapter, and actively engage in the programme to unlock their potential.

The launch of the UNIVEN-UGO Student Chapter marks a significant step towards empowering students to lead, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, reinforcing the University of Venda's role in shaping future leaders.



Dignitaries



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