

South Africa: A Great Choice for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education



By **Professor Ahmed Bawa**, CEO of Universities South Africa (USAf)

South Africa's 26 universities represent a rich, diverse Higher Education system, finely interwoven into the complex social, economic and physical fabric of the country, a society traversing its third decade of democracy. It has well-established research and teaching activities across all the academic domains contributing much to South Africa's experiments on sustainable socioeconomic development, social inclusion, economic growth and nation-building. On the other hand, it is intricately interwoven into the global community of universities and as such, it is at once, intensely local and global.

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Three types of institutions make up the South African Higher Education system. The universities of technology have a strong vocational bent with considerable links with industry. They have a strong emphasis on professional training. For instance, students are expected to complete long periods of work, integrated learning or internships in industry before graduating and the academic programmes have active industry advisory boards. Then there are the traditional universities which offer both professional training and an exhilarating selection of programmes that lead to the more traditional, formative Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. The comprehensive universities are a new type of institution that grew out of interesting mergers between traditional universities and what was previously called technikons. They carry both traditions which give them a rich diversity of programmes, students and academics.

Research is carried out at all South African universities. It is a requirement. Having said this, some universities are more research-intensive than others and these usually have a broader spectrum of academic areas in which they are research active. Funding for research comes from multiple sources, one of which is industry that mainly supports the research of interest to it.

All of South Africa's universities offer postgraduate education leading to Masters and Doctoral degrees that are linked to the research going on at each institution. At the research-intensive institutions, there is a wide spectrum of exceptional programmes; everything from Theoretical Physics to Clinical Medical Sciences to Water and Sanitation Sciences, to Energy Security to Applied Philosophy, to Inclusive Economic Growth, to Social Cohesion and Development Studies. South Africa represents a wonderful opportunity for those who wish to explore the world of advanced learning.

South African universities understand the importance of building international education as a way of generating diversity amongst students, amongst knowledge traditions and most importantly, to address social problems that are both local and global in scope. The universities fully understand the importance of contributing to the construction of a global community of scholars and the importance of, deliberately and by design, shaping themselves to attract the best international students. Their primary selling point is the quality of the education and training that they offer. And perhaps most importantly, you will be welcomed by a nation that thrives on being part of the global community.



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