

MEDIA ADVISORY

Unisa's Department of Political Sciences marks 80 years of shaping political thought and public discourse

Approved for Public release

Monday, 31 August 2026

The University of South Africa (Unisa)'s Department of Political Sciences, housed within the College of Human Sciences (CHS), will celebrate its **80th anniversary** with a special gathering reflecting on eight decades of teaching, research, scholarship and thought leadership in South Africa, Africa and beyond.

The anniversary celebration will take place on Wednesday, 02 September 2026, from 09:00 to 14:00 at Unisa's Muckleneuck Campus in Pretoria.

Since its establishment in 1946, the Department of Political Sciences has traversed some of the most defining periods in South Africa's political history from segregation and apartheid to the post-1994 constitutional democratic dispensation. Over eight decades, the Department has contributed to the teaching and study of politics while providing a platform for diverse voices to interrogate power, democracy, governance and society.

The anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the Department's contribution to thought leadership and public discourse across the political landscape locally, within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), across the African continent and internationally.

From established scholars and political commentators to emerging voices, women and men, different generations have found intellectual expression through the Department. Among those associated with its rich history are Sanet Madonsela Solomon and Professor Dirk Kotze, among many others who have contributed to shaping political scholarship and public debate in the global arena.

The celebration will not only look back at the Department's remarkable journey, but will also interrogate the present and consider the future of political science.

A key theme will be the state of democracy in post-1994 South Africa, including the challenges confronting democratic institutions, political participation and public life. The gathering will bring together government leaders, academics, students, alumni and other stakeholders to reflect critically on where South African democracy has come from and where it should go.

The anniversary also comes at a critical moment for the discipline globally, as political scientists grapple with the rise of far-right politics, populism and other forces reshaping democratic societies. The discussions will therefore consider how the study of politics must evolve to interrogate an increasingly complex and uncertain political landscape and contribute towards shaping futures that are better than the present.

The 80th anniversary celebration will be honoured by Executive Dean of CHS, Professor Zethu Nkosi, together with School Directors Professor Siyasanga Tyali, Professor Azwihangwisi Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Professor Mokgele Madise, as well as members of the College Management.



The programme will include remarks and reflections from the current Chair of the Department of Political Sciences, Dr Thabisi Hoeane, and former chairs of the Department, including: Professor Dirk Kotze, Professor Pieter Labuschagne, Professor Kealeboga Maphunye and Professor Susan Botha

The programme will also feature reflections from retired members of the Department and alumni, providing an intergenerational perspective on the Department's contribution to scholarship, teaching, research and public discourse.

The anniversary is both a celebration of an extraordinary institutional journey and an invitation to consider the role of political science in confronting the challenges of the present and shaping the political futures of South Africa, the continent and the world.

Members of the media are invited to attend and cover the 80th Anniversary Celebration.

Event: Unisa Department of Political Sciences 80th Anniversary Celebration

Date: Wednesday, 02 September 2026

Time: 09:00–14:00

Venue: Unisa Muckleneuck Campus, Pretoria, Kgorong Building - Function Hall

\\Ends.

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