

UNISA 2030 STRATEGY

Forging Ahead



Define Tomorrow

UNISA | 
university
of south africa



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Our Strategic Context

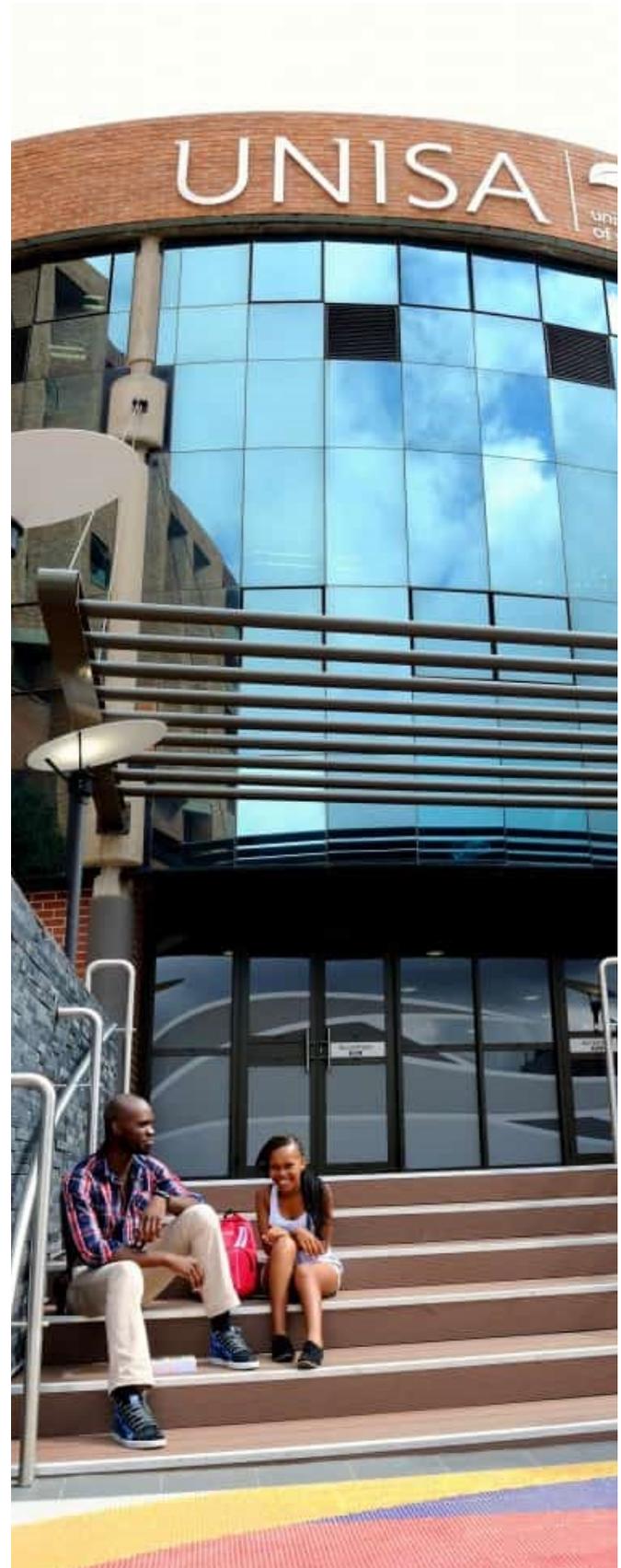
The University's 2030 strategy spells out the vision, mission, values and strategic focus areas of the University. This strategy, among other things, aims at creating optimal conditions for teaching, learning, research and community engagement. A new strategic plan for the University, Vision 2030, was adopted by Council in 2015. UNISA 2030 strategy is a revision of UNISA 2015 – An Agenda for Transformation. The UNISA Strategic Plan 2016–2030 marks the second phase in UNISA's strategic planning and direction after the mergers of the former University of South Africa, Technikon South Africa and the Vista University Distance Education Centre to form the new UNISA.

In March 2019, the University commissioned a review of the implementation of its UNISA 2030 Strategic Plan. The purpose of the review included considering how environmental changes since 2016 might impact on the current setting and accomplishment of strategic targets.

The strategy workshop that was held in September 2019, supported management's proposal for a need to revise the 2016–2030 strategy.

The revisions of the strategy had to consider key priorities for the University, as well as the development of improvement plans for those areas that still need focussed attention for the University to deliver at an optimal level.

In October 2019, UNISA started the process of revising its strategy to enable the University to remain relevant in an ever-changing and competitive higher education landscape. The revised strategy is expected to accelerate transformation and to usher in a fully-fledged Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) delivery mode, supported by a strong ICT and agile administrative environment. The future focus will continue to be on providing an excellent student experience underpinned by a student-centric academic agenda and services.



Our Heritage

UNISA has been the single constant by being a genuine, dependable beacon of hope where, at times, there seemed to be no other in the provisioning of distance education in Africa. In 2020, UNISA provides access to higher education by distance mode to more than 400 000 students from 130 countries around the world – 25 000 of these hailing from South Africa's continental neighbours. UNISA continues to turn out more than 50 000 skilled and competent graduates annually. It accounts for producing close to a third of South Africa's chartered accountants, thereby making a huge contribution to alleviating the scarcity of skills in South Africa and abroad. It is a proud contributor to the education of more than half of South Africa's teachers in various levels of basic education and in the provision of further education. UNISA is proud of the many successful politicians, writers, artists, composers, singers, advertising gurus and business leaders it counts amongst its alumni – a cohort that includes Nobel Peace Prize winners.

In 2020, UNISA celebrated its one hundred and forty-seventh year as one of the world's mega distance providers of quality education. Over this period, the institution has given rise to many other universities in South Africa, as well as Open Distance Universities in the rest of Africa, and has undergone several metamorphoses: from initially being an examination centre to ultimately becoming an ODeL institution in its own right. It has made immense contributions to the development of both the country and the continent..

UNISA has, over time, carved for itself a niche as a provider of quality distance education. In the post-2020 context, UNISA will become an exemplar of online teaching and e-assessments and a critical disrupter in enabling wider access to Higher Education.

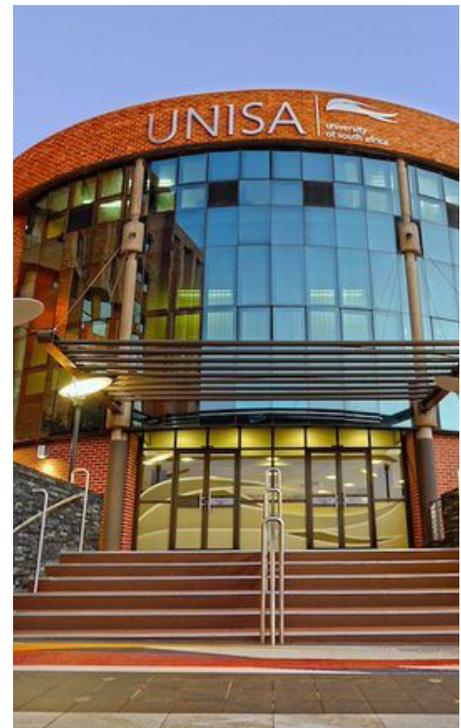




Our Environment

The revised strategy recognises and takes account of the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that emanate from both the internal and external environment. As a key strength, UNISA prides itself in 2020 on its track record of 147 years providing quality distance education programmes, accredited and recognised, both formal and non-formal, to a diverse group of students. UNISA also offers a varied qualification mix to ensure professional advancement and the employability of its students. Through its strong established partnerships, UNISA delivers effective quality education through its highly skilled personnel, more than half of whom have doctoral qualifications. UNISA continues to be impactful in society through its community engagement projects partnerships with key critical stakeholders. Addressing its recognised and acknowledged challenges will be integral to its implementation of the 2030 strategy.

The identified opportunities also pave the way for UNISA to expand its operations in line with the four key strategic focus areas referenced next.

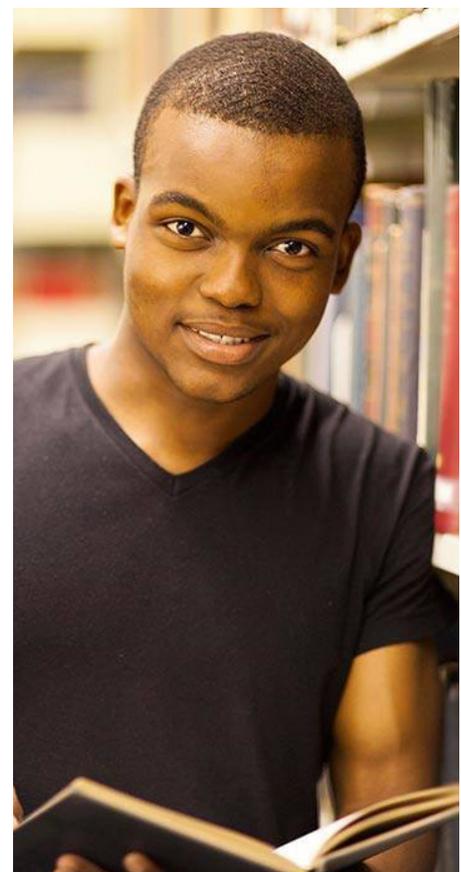


UNISA in the Next Decade

UNISA has a bright future that will be build on its proud heritage and on the significant role that the institution has played and will continue to play in the positive massification of South African tertiary education. In this way, it will directly contribute to addressing the imbalances and injustices of our country's past. It will achieve this by being a comprehensive ODeL university with quality academic and professional staff – and UNISA 2030 is intended to provide its direction in the next decade.

UNISA has the unique advantage of catering for diverse populations, including people with disabilities, members of the working class, mid-career workers and, as of recently, underprepared school-leavers who have no experience of learning at distance institutions. The University's strategy revision process has taken into cognisance the changing policy environment, stringent reporting regime and regulatory, risk and compliance requirements. It also acknowledges the future broad impact of Covid-19 on our society and our operations.

This new context requires that there be a prioritisation of national resources. Thus, future university budgets will, amongst other things, have to deal with expanding the organisation's ITC capacity and taking care of health and safety issues. Our understanding of work is being redefined, changing in ways that nobody anticipated.



Critical insights for the next decade

The University has, from its benchmarking and environmental scans, gathered valuable insights on how to approach the next decade. By 2030, UNISA aims to have executed the revised Strategy 2030 in full and to have made significant strides towards achieving its Vision. The University now recognises:



Changing Learning Styles

Traditional teaching styles are no longer effective for Millennials and Generation Z – specifically Generation Z who were born into the age of technology. Researchers have found that these generations are not passive learners but prefer a learning environment that allows them to fully immerse themselves in the learning experience, allows for collaboration with other students, and allows for online learning. Contact universities have also begun their journey from traditional styles of teaching to more blended approaches.



Changing Labour Markets

Changing labour markets require curriculums to become more flexible and easier to alter in order to address fast-moving changes in the workplace. Developing graduate attributes that will lead to employability is a critical mandate for the University while 40% of its students in 2020 are unemployed.



Massive Open Online Course

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) has taken off significantly in the United States and Europe and has made its way to South Africa. Platforms such as Coursera, edX, Udacity and Udemy provide higher education courses and resources making use of online platforms that permit self-studying at a more affordable rate than traditional universities. These platforms allow for a truly online learning experience where students have access to recorded lectures, readings, interactive online assessments that provide immediate feedback, and online support communities where students are able to interact with other students, professors and teaching assistants. Such platforms have made it affordable for students to access courses from prestigious international universities and courses specifically designed by companies.



Shifting Demographics

Th shifting UNISA demographics need to be closely monitored. They indicate that the University has evolved from being primarily an education provider for working, part-time students. Indeed, UNISA has evolved into being an institution that is now comprised of 30% of under-24-year-old and 40% unemployed students who might be studying on a full-time basis. The latter cohort brings with it new dynamics and requirements that impact on physical infrastructure provision and student support modalities, amongst other things. This calls for a greater understanding of our students.



2. Our Vision, Mission and Values

The African university shaping futures in the service of humanity.

The spirit of UNISA's vision statement – Towards the African University in the service of humanity – is set out in the 2015 Strategic Plan. This remains a compelling signifier of the University's bold aspirations and unique positioning as UNISA approaches its 150th anniversary within the next five years. UNISA has become an iconic and productive model of an African University synonymous with Open Distance Learning in Africa and abroad. It has gained stature and repute as a national, continental and international treasure in respect of providing access to higher education, especially to those who cannot access contact institutions. There is an overwhelming recognition of the fact that, throughout much of its history, UNISA has been "shaping futures" and is thus truly an African University "shaping futures" in the service of humanity.

This vision remains a compelling identity marker as UNISA charts its future as a mega open distance e-Learning (ODeL) provider with a footprint across many countries.

The vision builds on a rich heritage and the privilege of being, since 1946, the first public university in the world to teach exclusively by means of Distance Education. UNISA's identification as "The African" university stems from its deep commitment to Africa-focused and Africa-centred knowledge creation and contributions in terms of our world view, identity and way of being. The University is always equally cognisant of the demand to be globally competitive through both its reach and its offerings. This vision defines everything that the University aspires to and, in so doing, describes its zeal to be of service to humanity.



We are a comprehensive student-centred Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL), Institution producing lifelong quality university education for all and knowledge dissemination that is continentally responsive and globally relevant.

The UNISA 2030 mission statement affirms the unique character of the institution, specifically in that it is the only dedicated comprehensive open distance learning higher education institution in South Africa. Quality scholarship, research and learning, culminating in the success and graduation of students who will make a difference in the service of humanity, is the hallmark so clearly foregrounded in the 2030 mission statement.

Given that UNISA accounts for more than a third of the student population in the South African higher education sector, its teaching and learning approach and delivery model requires the development of an organisation-wide ICT capability that is supported by a robust, stable, cutting-edge ICT infrastructure and platforms.



By being comprehensive, UNISA opens access to both general academic and career-focused programmes. Students have options to choose from a wider variety of programmes with different entry requirements and improved articulation between the career-focused and general academic programmes. This enhances student mobility between different programmes. Being comprehensive also creates expanded opportunities for basic and applied research that is responsive to the social and economic needs of industry and civil society, on the African continent and throughout the world. The University continues to provide a wide range of qualifications, from certificate programmes to doctoral qualifications.

Student-centred means that even though our students may be geographically distant from the University, their lived experience will be one of the University being close to them. The University will create opportunities for individuals to traverse from learning to work and from work to learning throughout their lives through carefully structured formal and non-formal programmes designed to respond to students' needs and to the market.

e-Learning means digitally delivered continuous learning on end-user devices, using Artificial Intelligence to improve learning experiences through interactions with chatbots and intelligent assistants. It also includes using Big Data – advanced analytics and information from learning management systems – as well as features (i.e. student assessments and performance tracking) intended to provide meaningful real time data about student behaviour for the customisation and personalisation of learning based on students' unique needs. e-Learning may also include gamification and micro-learning – bite-sized support resources including easy-to-digest microlearning content such as short games, videos, quizzes or interactive infographics – as part of the quality learning experience.



UNISA has made a special commitment to quality education (SDG 4) and societal transformation (NDP objective 1 and 7; SDG 1, 2, 8, 10,17) and is committed to mainstreaming and affirming African knowledge and scholarship in a bid to address the African historical and developmental condition.

Given the progress made during UNISA 2015: Towards a High-Performance University, UNISA can unequivocally commit to a concerted and dedicated trajectory in order to actualise its aspiration of being The African University. UNISA's promise to its stakeholders is to provide quality education which will, in turn, assist in reducing inequality and will focus on key capabilities of both people and the country. These capabilities include the development of critical skills, infrastructure, social security, strong institutions and meaningful partnerships – both within the country and with key international partners aligned to the UN's sustainable development goals operating within a values driven culture.

As part of its strategic relevance in the continent and globally, UNISA, differentiates itself by conscientiously and deliberately aligning its strategy, firstly with the National Development Plan 2030 and then with the African Union's 2063 agenda, with special emphasis on uniting Africans and South Africans of all races and classes around a common programme to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. This commitment also works in tandem with the aspirations of high standards of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens.

These ideals will be achieved by creating well-educated citizens and the mounting of a skills revolution underpinned by technology and innovation.

In its mission, UNISA purports to drive all the sustainable development goals through its teaching, research and community engagement initiatives and partnerships, these being evident in the biennial report submitted to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). Moreover, UNISA is the first university in South Africa to be a signatory to the UNGC.



Our Values

These stem from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and include the inalienable right to human dignity and the recognition and respect of diversity for the attainment of equality. They also affirm our historical values of social justice and fairness as a constitutive element of dignity, emphasising freedom of conscience, belief, thought, opinion and expression, academic freedom and freedom of scientific research, freedom of artistic creativity, freedom to receive or impart information or ideas, and the inherent right to have dignity respected and protected. These empowering standards are inherent in all the rules and policies of UNISA. In aspiring to achieve its vision and be true to the commitments of its mission statement, UNISA unambiguously and unequivocally subscribes to the following values:

Ethical and collective responsibility

Ethics reflect the intrinsic and extrinsic values, principles, norms and standards to which UNISA is committed and are undergirded by respect, integrity, accountability and excellence. Our ethics guide all institutional conduct, actions, decisions and stakeholder relations, supporting equity and fairness. Against this backdrop, our decision-making will be participatory in the interests of the effective and efficient functioning of the university – all employees are equally responsible for decisions taken and implementation is underpinned by commitment and loyalty to and solidarity with UNISA.

Integrity

Integrity refers to conduct guided by honesty, equity, respect, transparency and responsibility in all that we do. Integrity must be evident at an individual level and it should be infused in the character of the institution through the behaviours of the individuals who constitute and engage with the university.

Innovation and excellence

At UNISA, innovation and excellence characterise the actions, attitudes and culture required to create new ideas, processes, systems, structures, or artefacts which, when implemented, lead to a sustainable and high-performing institution. They are the underlying principles that we, as change agents, use to make a difference in the way we work with the limited resources available to achieve our specific goals despite contextual and policy constraints. Innovation requires everyone to adopt a problem-solving approach that fosters intellectual ingenuity and novel solutions rather than simply problem identification.

Responsive student-centredness

Responsive student-centeredness reflects our commitment to recognising, cultivating and promoting the interests and views of students – especially their lived experiences and prior learning – in order to achieve academic access and success in an Open Distance e-Learning context.

Dignity in diversity

At UNISA, we will strive to promote humanness, anti-racism and self-worth in the context of cultural and intellectual differences for the attainment of equality, and will not tolerate unfair discrimination based on race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, HIV status or any other arbitrary grounds. This value speaks to UNISA's soul and identity

Accountability

In order to promote a high-performance culture and work ethic, we accept individual accountability for our decisions, our actions and mistakes as individuals – irrespective of whether we are leaders, employees, or students. We are clear about our expectations from each other and we ensure that our expectations are credible and reasonable. We hold one another accountable for what we have agreed upon within a UNISA consequence management regime.

3. UNISA Business Model

The revised strategy will be supported by a sound and compressive business model. The business model identifies our capitals, activities, and outcomes to ensure “How will UNISA win” in its chosen focus areas and its environment. The business model speaks to our value proposition, customer segmentation, key partners, stakeholder relationships, key processes, key resources, cost structure, revenue streams and delivery model. This model will ensure a successful operationalisation of the strategy and assist in identifying key sources of revenue, our intended customer base, resources, processes, products and details of financing our envisaged activities.



Key Partners

- Department of Higher Education and Training
- Council on Higher Education
- South African Qualification Authority
- Alumni
- Donors
- Foundations
- Professional bodies
- Employer groups
- Broader African community

To support the value proposition, UNISA will need a reliable service provider/ business partners for the provision of ICT services and regional facilities.



Key Activities

- Development of integrated learning experiences.
- Robust, agile and stable ICT systems and applications.
- Robust financial management strategy.



Key Resources

- Quality academics, and support and administrative workforce.
- Physical infrastructure
- ICT infrastructure
- Reliable communication channels & printing facilities
- Funding



Value Propositions

- Globally competitive programme qualification mix.
- Short learning programmes
- Higher certificates
- Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Post-graduate Diploma courses
- Bachelor's degrees
- Honours degrees
- Master's degrees
- Doctoral degrees
- Production of cutting-edge research, innovation and being a leader in African knowledge creation



Customer Relationships

- Student-centred
- Relationships with employers



Channels

- Printed materials (to be phased out)
- Prescribed books
- MyUnisa (Online learning and materials to be phased in)
- Regional Learning Centres



Customer Segments

- Meet the minimum admission or alternative statutory requirements:
- Independent self learners
- Primary mature and mid-career students
- Students with disabilities
- Out-of-high-school learners



Cost Structure

- Remuneration for academics
- Remuneration for support and administrative Staff
- Physical infrastructure
- ICT infrastructure
- Printing and courier
- Examination administration
- Laboratories
- Academic and support consumables, management costs



Revenue Streams

- Government subsidy: Teaching input, teaching output, research output, institutional factor, and earmarked funding.
- Tuition and other fee income.
- Interest and dividends.
- Other: research income, renting out of facilities, parking, recycling, catering services, publication and print services.



4. UNISA Capitals

Human Capital

- Established stakeholder partnerships in delivery
- A well-qualified and diverse staff cohort
- Continuous staff recruitment, retention, development and deployment

Intellectual Capital

- Appropriate, flexible and open systems, policies and procedures
- Branding and marketing of programmes
- Research outputs
- Patents granted

Reputational Capital

- Pioneer ODeL model for higher education in a developing economy
- Longest standing track record for public distance education worldwide – 146 years
- Largest distance education institution in Africa – with close to 350 000 students
- Recognised global competitiveness and excellence

Financial Capital

Revenue streams

- Tuition fees
- Investment income

Third party funding

- Private donations
- Grants
- Ring-fenced donations for projects
- Other third-stream income sources (short learning programmes, Unisa Business Enterprise)

Social & Relationship Capital

- Established stakeholder partnerships
- Growing enrolled base and graduates, alumni
- Offering of bridging courses to enable advancing higher education
- Registered community engagement programmes
- Renewable and non-renewable environmental resources and processes; preserving biodiversity and eco-system health within Unisa's sphere of influence/control

Access Capital

- ODeL model for superior accessibility to affordable quality higher education irrespective of geographical location, study budget: study time availability (while working); or qualification scores for conventional tertiary education
- Regional learning & research support resources - Printing study material on demand
- Robust and modern ICT systems on all campuses
- Modern, appropriate multipurpose facilities and infrastructure at all campuses e.g. smart buildings for 24/7 access
- Library is accessible to students through myUnisa and the Library App (24/7) and has, over the years, increased its subscription to the following eResources to ensure online 24/7 library access:
 - 200 000 e-Books (this includes some textbooks that are available on e-print)
 - Most textbooks in hard-print from the publishers
 - 441 Individual database titles
 - 481 371 e-journal titles
 - 11931 linked E-reserves

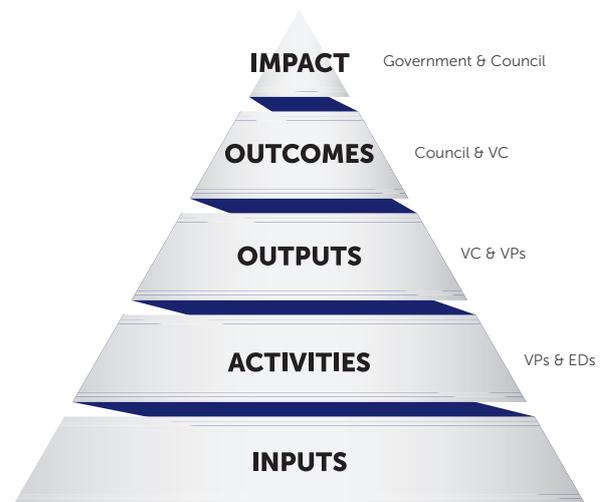


5. Performance Management Framework

UNISA needs to steer clear of trying to be “everything to everybody”. UNISA, is a distance learning institution which traditionally catered for working adults, is now confronted with a growing youthful population in South Africa and on the continent. The current strategy must take cognisance of these developments by defining who our students are. This requires us to embrace that a UNISA student should be an independent self- directed learner willing to study through distance with appropriate academic support to ensure success within the shortest possible time. This understanding calls for better refinement of our processes and our thinking and orientation of staff and student in respect to the design of our learning materials, our teaching and learning strategies, our delivery tools and our support of our students, all of which acknowledge access to learning and materials in a internet mediated manner and in recognition of technological advancements of the 4th and 5th industrial revolution capabilities at our disposal. In pursuit of this quest to become a fully-fledged ODeL institution by 2030, the University needs to shed its paper-driven studying and working environment into a paperless and online environment by 2025.

The University needs to revise its performance management model for the next decade. This is in recognition of the daunting task of trying to plan for many years into the future in a volatile, uncertain, ambiguous and rapidly changing environment – including the Covid-19 and Post Covid-19 aspects of that environment.

UNISA has divided its planning cycles for the period 2016 –2030 into three phases: 2016–2020, 2021–2025 and 2026–2030. Strategic objectives and targets are defined according to an outcomes-based approach and the University will thus adopt a new tiered approach as represented in the following graphic:



At the highest level, UNISA’s contributions will have an Impact in relation to the country’s national priorities. The University contributes to these ideals in tandem with other institutions and, at this level, its contributions are not measured.

A level below are Outcomes, which are the high-level results of UNISA’s efforts. These are the targets that the Vice Chancellor and Principal is responsible for and reports on to Council.

Outputs are the results of a Portfolio’s efforts to contribute to the Outcomes at Council level. These are not necessarily at a strategic level, but do need to be monitored at Portfolio level.

Activities at the operational/execution level are overseen by Departmental Heads, Executive Directors and so on and they directly contribute towards the outputs measured at Output level.

At Inputs levels, resources required are allocated to facilitate and make possible the required Activities, considering context and people.



6. UNISA Strategy Map

Vision	The African university shaping futures in the service of humanity			
Mission	We are a comprehensive, student-centred Open Distance e-Learning (ODEL) Institution, producing life-long quality university education for all and knowledge dissemination that is continentally responsive and globally relevant			
How do we look to our stakeholders?	Stakeholder Perspective (Reputational Capital, Access Capital and Social & Relationship Capital)			
	Improve first-year student retention	Enhance student success rate	Grow post-graduate component	Improve Student Satisfaction Index
	Offer accredited and registered quality programmes	Programmes that manifest indigenous knowledge and/or are available in select indigenous languages	Comprehensive online offerings	Facilitate access to digital devices and networks
	Improve collaborations in the area of community engagement	Improve research output	Improve Research Citation Index	Improve Research Citation Index
What do we do to have financial integrity & sustainability?	Financial Perspective (Financial Capital)			
	Financial sustainability	Financial regulatory compliance		Financial integrity
What can we do to be more efficient with our resources?	Internal Efficiencies Perspective (Crosscuts all six Capitals)			
	Adherence to principles of good governance	Ensure an appropriate size and shape for a comprehensive university	Smart campus implementation Appropriate ICT business solutions, including an LMS with learning analytics capabilities	Alignment amongst governance structures to enhance transformation along BBBEE lines
How do we improve our human and intellectual resources?	Learning And Growth Perspective (Human Capital and Intellectual Capital)			
	Being a preferred higher education employer	Staff with appropriate aptitude, skills and temperament to operate in a 4th IR, technology-driven environment		Advance African scholarship through global collaborations
Values	Ethical and collective responsibility, Integrity, Innovation and excellence, Responsive student-centeredness, Dignity in diversity, Accountability			

UNISA



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