

NELSON MANDELA  
UNIVERSITY

**Celebrating Excellence**

with the

*Academic Achiever's Awards*

*and*

*Vice-Chancellor's Excellence  
Awards*



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# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Welcome to Nelson Mandela University's Celebrating Excellence Awards evening in which we will recognise those who subscribe to excellence.



These are the student academic achievers and the staff, from all divisions of the institution, whose work as academics, researchers or professional, administrative and support service employees, is exceptional.

Excellence is one of the University's six values. It is core to achieving our vision to be a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future.

Those we celebrate in 2023 have surpassed our expectations.

You inspire us to do better!

I wish to acknowledge the hard work and time that you have devoted to your studies and to your work, whichever your area of expertise.

A special word of thanks and appreciation goes to your families, colleagues and communities, who have supported you in your journey.

You do us proud as worthy ambassadors of Nelson Mandela University.

Congratulations on your outstanding achievements.

**Professor Sibongile Muthwa**  
Vice-Chancellor

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*"I wish to acknowledge the hard work and time that you have devoted to your studies and to your work, whichever your area of expertise."*

# ACADEMIC AWARDS

## First-Year Undergraduate Diploma and Degree Study Awards

These awards are made to students registered for their second year of study, on the grounds of academic achievement in their first year.





## Keanu Kapank

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

"This award made me realise that the only barriers and problems you have are the ones you create in your mind," says Keanu, who obtained an average of 91% in his first year of IT: Software Development. He wants to make a positive impact on his family's lives as they face financial difficulties daily, and be a role model to friends who have lost their way, influenced by negative beliefs and values. Keanu aspires to complete a Bachelor of IT degree and his dream job would be at Silicon Valley's biggest corporation, Meta.

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*"Do not be conformed to this sinful world, but let God transform you by renewing your mind."*

*Romans 12:2*

***"Perfection has to do with the end product, but excellence has to do with the process."***



## Hayley Britz

Faculty of Science

With an average of 94% for her first year BSc (General) studies, 100% for programming fundamentals, and 96% for mathematics, Hayley wants to major in physics and computer sciences. Thereafter, she wants to continue studying to obtain her doctorate. Her dream job is to be at a university as a lecturer or researcher, like her parents, who are both in academia. "I love to learn. I am very interested in electromagnetism and nuclear energy." Apart from her exceptional academic abilities (she also attained an average of 93% in matric), Hayley is an accomplished musician who played in the first violin section of the University Symphony Orchestra.

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*"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."*

***"Excellence is doing ordinary things  
extraordinary well."***

# FIRST DIPLOMA AWARDS

These awards go to the best initial diploma achiever in  
each faculty.







## Justin Prince

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

“My ideal job must inspire me,” says Justin, who graduated with an average of 88% for his Diploma in Management qualification. He obtained 20 distinctions, and 90% and above for 12 of his modules, including 100% for Financial Management II. Like so many other Mandela University students Justin wishes to add value and make a positive impact in his chosen career field. “I want to grow professionally and make a difference.” Right now, he is studying for his Advanced Diploma in Financial Planning and Services and thereafter hopes to complete a Postgraduate Degree in Financial Planning.

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*“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.”*

*Aristotle*

***“Passion is the secret ingredient that drives hard work and excellence.”***

• First Diploma Award •



## Biandr  Streso

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Biandr  believes he already has his dream job as a junior software engineer at COMPRSA, a software development company in Gqeberha. Being creative and testing different options is one of the best things about being a software engineer, and he is already doing this daily at the outset of his career. Biandr , who achieved an average of 86% in his Diploma in IT Software Development, would also love to study computer science in future. At school he participated in First Lego League robotics, played first team tennis, and was the school magazine's sub-editor.

---

*"Time is all we have and don't."  
Atticus*

***"Excellence is a better teacher than  
mediocrity."***



## Sindisiwe Tshabalala

Faculty of Health Sciences

“When I studied for my Diploma in Sport Management, I wanted to be one of the youngest assistant directors of sport, as I have witnessed just how much sport can influence, change, and give hope to many individuals.” That’s the hope of Sindiswa, who is now a student teacher at Woodridge College, while completing her Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) part-time. She believes in equal opportunities for men and women in sport and her dream job is to be a director at the Department of Sport and Recreation, while realising her hopes and also supporting her family.

---

*“You miss 100% of the opportunities you don’t take.”*

***“Productivity is the result of a commitment to excellence.”***



## Debrah Coeries

Faculty of Humanities

Debrah's dream job is to be a full-time performing and professional recording artist, travelling, and exploring different countries and cultures. But first she wants to increase her knowledge and complete her degree. Debrah graduated with an average of 82% for her Diploma in Music. She is amazed by, and grateful for, this achievement, considering the pandemic's impact on her studies. She is also currently running her own small thrift business. Debrah was head girl at school and nominated to attend an International Student Convention in the USA in 2018.

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*"You're never too old to learn. Keep an open mind and be ready to learn."*

***"Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better."***

• First Diploma Award •



## Ruan Gallant

Faculty of Law

Currently an intern at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Ruan hopes to be Senior Marine Conservation Inspector at the Department. He graduated with an average of 89% for his Diploma in Law Enforcement and wants to study the Advanced Diploma in Law Enforcement, as well as attain his LLB. Being passionate about nature, Ruan cherishes the ocean and is devoted to preserving marine resources. He values law and order, and believes they safeguard us from chaos, in an ever-changing world. As a fisheries control officer, he hopes to be part of sustaining the beauty of the environment for future generations.

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*"If you can dream it, you can do it."*

***"Excellence endures and sustains."***



## Eloise Krisch

Faculty of Science

Eloise wants to work at a wildlife reserve, ranch, rehabilitation, or research centre, in line with her passion for nature and commitment to making a difference. She is determined to continue her studies to this end. Eloise, who is from George, achieved an average of 84% for her Diploma in Game Ranch Management qualification. If she is able to add value within her field – be it veld or wildlife rehabilitation projects, safari tours, lodge management, or in running her own game ranch and conservation business - she will be happy. "I love learning new things within my field," she says.

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*"You've got this. It is okay to fail, but it is not okay to give up."*

***Excellence is doing ordinary things extraordinary well.***

# FIRST DEGREE AWARDS

These awards go to the graduate who had the best degree performance in each of the seven faculties.





## Nadeane Maritz

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

"I hope to always make a difference no matter where or with whom I am working. I want to be the change by being kind and considerate," says Nadeane Maritz, who obtained 80% for her BCom in Logistics and Transportation Economics. Nadeane, who calls Mossel Bay home, is currently teaching in Hong Kong, a job she loves. She also plans to do her honours degree and perhaps a Postgraduation Certificate in Education (PGCE) to be able to teach Economics, as she enjoyed it at school. She also wants to acquire experience and further expand her knowledge in the fields of logistics or supply chain line work. On a completely different note, running a guest house is something she would consider when older as she loves working with people.

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*"Being an understanding and considerate human being might just mean the world to someone else."*

***"The noblest search is the search for excellence."***





## Kayleigh McRae

Faculty of Education

Apart from achieving an average of 89% for her BEd (Foundation Phase Teaching), Kayleigh also holds an honours degree in Psychology. Her research focused on how ballet dancing affected the confidence levels of male adolescents. Now, as a new teacher at Mount Pleasant Primary School, she hopes to learn as much from her learners as they learn from her. "I want to contribute meaningfully to the world of teaching," says Kayleigh, who believes her educational and psychology studies complement one another. She would like to take both disciplines into future doctoral studies, as well as expanding her horizons by teaching in either America or Europe.

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*"Learn from others, as much as what they learn from you."*

***"Excellence shows the spiritual worth of the world."***



## Tayla Futcher

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment, and Technology

“My dream job would be one that allows me to use both my creative and analytical brain. The company would value their employees, treat them well and create a space to learn new things, allowing you to grow both personally and professionally”, says Tayla, who achieved an average of 95% for her Bachelor of Information Technology. Today, Tayla is living her dream, teaching English in South Korea, hoping to study the Korean language and enhance her proficiency. She also wants to improve her coding abilities, as she is likely to enter the IT field going forward. However, Tayla says she is open to working wherever opportunities might take her.

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*“This too shall pass.”*

***“When a team learns team confidence,  
excellence becomes a reality.”***



## Abdalla Mohamed

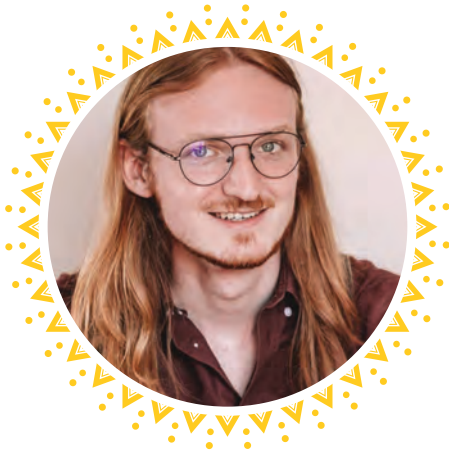
Faculty of Health Sciences

Bachelor of Nursing degree student Abdalla has always wanted to be a cardiac surgeon. "As South Africa was the first country to have a successful heart transplant, I wanted to learn from the pioneers." As he could not afford medical programmes, the Kenyan student chose Nelson Mandela University for his nursing studies. He wanted to honour President Mandela's call to "change the world", one heart at a time, by working as a scrub nurse alongside cardiac surgeons. Abdalla achieved an average of 82% for his Bachelor of Nursing degree. He wants to work for Doctors Without Borders and believes that placing the needs of others before your own, is an important step in self-discovery.

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*"The best way to find yourself is to  
lose yourself in the service of others."  
Mahatma Gandhi*

***"There are no shortcuts to true  
excellence."***



## James van der Merwe

Faculty of Humanities

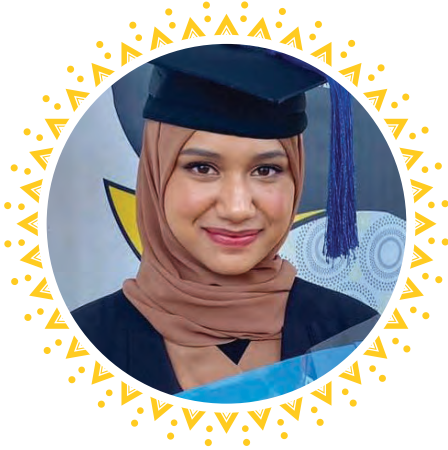
James has applied to study for his master's degree in music research as part of his quest towards obtaining a doctorate in neuropsychology. He achieved an average of 87% for his BMus. He received several distinctions for music, and full honours for music, academics, culture, and service at school. He believes in undertaking each assignment or test one at a time, and achieving the best possible results. While he is currently teaching saxophone and voice at Pearson High School, his ideal job would be in private practice or at an academic institution lecturing and contributing to research. Regardless of this, however, he is committed to forming kind and genuine connections with others throughout his career.

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*"If, at the end of your first ten or fifteen years of fighting, working and feeling, you've written one line of one poem, you'll be very lucky indeed."*

*E E Cummings*

***"Remain steadfast in your pursuit of excellence."***



## Salma Lukie

Faculty of Law

“My dream profession would be as an international relations lawyer, although I am currently interested in commercial law,” says Salma Lukie, who achieved a 79% average for her first year of LLB. Salma wants to become an advocate for human rights, especially in light of the many current crises, including Palestine and the Congo. Her advocacy means politics is also of interest to her, especially in how governance impacts on disadvantaged communities. In the interim, she would like to acquire experience with a big reputable law firm, but specifically ENSafrica, the biggest law firm in Africa. Salma calls both Gqeberha and Saudi Arabia home.

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*“Verily, with hardship comes ease.”*

***“If we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.”***

• First Degree Award •



## Keegan Perry

Faculty of Science

Keegan hopes to continue along the path of academia and pursue research that makes a positive impact in the field of computer science. With an average of 89% for his BSc in Computer Science qualification, he is currently completing his honours degree with the aim of pursuing a master's degree and eventually a PhD. "I would love the opportunity to travel around the world, so I would like to work somewhere where that is possible, hopefully in academia. I would like to be able to do research that makes a difference – and make a positive impact in the field of computer science," he says.

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*"It makes much more sense to live in the present tense."*

***"Passion is the secret ingredient that drives hard work and excellence."***

# HONOURS AWARDS

These awards go to the best honours graduate in the broad fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and within Science, Engineering and Technology.





## Cassandra Tregoning

Honours Award: Social Sciences and Humanities

Cassandra obtained an average of 87% for her honours degree in English with her treatise focused on sexual violence representation in South African short fiction. "Society and literature are in constant conversation, and I examined its connection as it relates to a serious, sensitive issue in South Africa. Literary analysis can illuminate how we think about perpetrators and victims," she says. Cassandra, who is currently an English teacher at Pearson High School, wants to study for her master's in English literature. While teaching English is her greatest passion, she wants to publish her academic work or creative writing, and dreams of writing young adult fantasy novels.

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*"You are your own stories, and therefore free to imagine what it is possible for you to be."*

*Jeanette Winterson*

***"True excellence is a product of synergy."***





## Erich du Plessis

Honours Award: Science, Engineering and Technology

Erich's honours research project used a genetic algorithm to determine an optimal harvesting strategy to save a species from extinction. Although more focused on the mathematics, his findings contribute to conservation. He achieved an 88% average for his BSc honours in Applied Mathematics. He is currently working as a quantitative analyst at Nedbank, combining mathematical and statistical methods and coding, identifying insights to inform business decisions. He wants to become an expert in the data science and quantitative analysis field and find out more about machine learning. Erich's dream job is to be a strategy engineer or data scientist in motorsports.

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*"I work today to improve my life tomorrow."*

***"Next to excellence is the appreciation of it."***

# MASTER'S BY COURSEWORK AWARDS

These awards go to the best master's degree by coursework graduates, inclusive of MTech candidates, in the broad fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and within Science, Engineering and Technology.





## Melody Peters

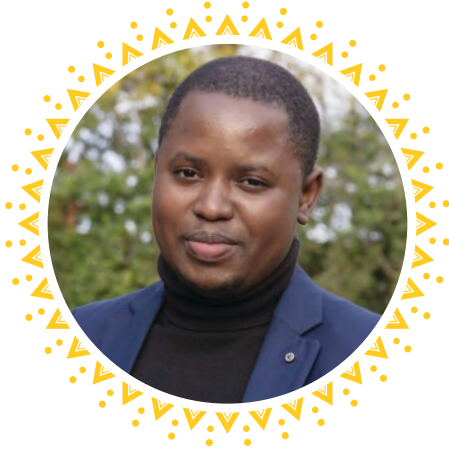
Master's Degree by Coursework: Social Sciences and Humanities

Melody wants to obtain her doctorate researching NSFAS-funded students, who make up most of the student body at Mandela University, and how to work towards developing University, and to develop interventions to improve their financial and overall well-being. Melody attained 81% for her master's degree in counselling psychology. She currently lectures at Varsity College and works in private practice. "This is my dream job," says Melody, who returned to university at the age of 37 to invest in the next generation of psychologists. She will also continue with her private practice work, including individual and family therapy, along with offering corporate talks and workshops. She believes Mandela University has pioneered student wellness in South Africa since the 1980s, providing a rich heritage for research.

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*"A single thread of hope is still a very powerful thing."*

***"It doesn't get easier, you just get stronger."***



## Luzuko Funda

Master's Degree by Coursework: Science, Engineering and Technology

With an average of 83% for his master's in architecture (professional), Luzuko also won the National Corobrik Award in 2022 and several other awards during his studies. His design project entailed revitalising the city surrounding the University of Fort Hare's Faculty of Agriculture building in East London. He created an 'edge building' that interacts with the public space and lightly touches the natural landscape, using modular systems for a sustainable structure. Luzuko, who hails from Mdantsane, East London, works at DHK Architects in Cape Town, gaining valuable experience with their hospitality and office-building projects. Before studying his PhD and lecturing, Luzuko wishes to expand his horizons and gain additional experience by possibly going overseas. He hopes to have his own architecture practice one day and build a legacy through leadership and specialisation in architecture.

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*"God raises me up, I will also lift others up."*

***"Excellence is a continuous process  
and not an accident."***

# MASTER'S BY DISSERTATION AWARDS

These awards go to the best master's by research dissertation degree graduates, inclusive of MTech candidates, in the broad fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and within Science, Engineering and Technology.





## Nadeema Musthan

Master's Degree by Dissertation: Social Sciences and Humanities

True democracy asks that we broaden participation in education to all; teaching is not something only for "experts" believes Nadeema, who achieved 84% for her master's in education. Her research with community literacy workers shows that people, with no formal qualifications (and therefore no knowledge), can and do build knowledge about how best to support literacy development in their community's children. Nadeema teaches English literacy methodology to Foundation Phase pre-service teachers at the University and is studying for her PhD. "I want to contribute towards a society that allows our children to access literacy in any language they choose, particularly African languages. I centre context, identity, and emotion, motivation, and desire as key to understand pedagogies developed by community members."

---

*"It's not enough to interpret or describe the world,  
we must transform it."*

***"Excellence is not a skill; it is an  
attitude."***



## Madri Kruger

Master's Degree by Dissertation: Science, Engineering and Technology

Madri's research analysed job postings on LinkedIn to identify various IT roles, and the necessary tasks, skills, knowledge, and abilities for each. This information was then compiled into a "Cybersecurity Skills Framework for South Africa," which South African tertiary institutions can use to align their curricula with industry needs. IT firms could also define job roles, train existing employees, and guide prospective ones thanks to her research. She has already presented her research findings at an international conference. Madri, who achieved 80% for her master's degree in information technology, is a remote lecturer/teacher in the Backend Development programme at Noroff School of Technology and Digital Media, in Norway. Going forward, she hopes to do a PhD and continue to teach face-to-face, with ongoing focus on cybersecurity too.

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*"If you can dream it, you can do it."*

*Walt Disney*

***"Autograph your work with  
excellence."***



## Thandekile Ncongwane

Master's Degree in Technology by  
Dissertation: Science, Engineering and  
Technology

Thandekile wants to become a bioenergy specialist, creating opportunities in disadvantaged areas through the biomass project, while giving back to the community in terms of knowledge, experience and support. She achieved an average of 93% for her master's degree in forestry. Her research entailed the recovery and growth of Patula pine trees after fully and partially mechanised harvesting, as well as the quantity of collectable tree material after harvesting. This biomass project was the first study in South Africa in the forestry field focusing on potential alternative energy sources in forestry, which align with key environmental, social, and economic factors, she says. Thandekile comes from Schoemansdal in Mpumalanga. She works at York Timbers and wants to study for her PhD in Bioenergy.

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*"Participation invites growth."*

***"Be a yardstick of quality."***



# **SOUTHERN AFRICA ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AWARD (S2A3)**

**This is awarded annually by each South African University and University of Technology to the most outstanding Master's Degree student in a scientific discipline.**

**The award is made in recognition of the perseverance and dedication of the successful Master's student in the application of scientific principles in original research and the presentation of a written dissertation required at Master's level.**



## Eleesha Annear



Eleesha researched cheetah and lion and their preference of prey for her master's degree in Zoology and discovered that cheetahs shift their diet seasonally. Cheetahs kill neonate and juvenile prey during the wet season and adult prey during the dry season. This shift in their diet is reflected in the seasonal synchronisation of cheetah reproduction with the breeding season of their prey, she says. Eleesha, who obtained 90% for her master's degree, lives in Belgium and has already published her research internationally. She is currently working on her PhD research at Antwerp University on the Cape Cliff lizard and the impact of the bony plates on their skin on their environment. She says home is and will always be South Africa.

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*"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us."*

***"Excellence is not being the best; it is doing your best."***

# **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S** **AWARDS** FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

**These special awards go to the best graduates and diplomates of the year. These are awarded to the:**

- Best first diploma student;
- Best first degree student;
- Best postgraduate (Science, Engineering and Technology) student; and
- Best postgraduate (Social Sciences and Humanities) student.

**The recipients are selected from the winners already honoured in the various categories.**



**VICE-CHANCELLOR'S  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS**



# PROFESSIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF (PASS) AWARDS

## **Professional, Administrative and Support Service Staff (PASS) Awards**

The People and Operations Division enables the institution to function with their foundational and support service to the academic project.

### **Individual Awards**

These awards are presented to individuals who have excelled across the various Peromnes levels in terms of their performance in enhancing the success of the institution.



- Professional, Administrative and Support Award •  
Peromnes level 10 to 12



## Jacqueline Smith

Executive Assistant: Executive Dean  
of Education

Jacqueline renders exceptional service and administrative support in the Faculty of Education, displaying remarkable multitasking skills, relationship building and office management. As Executive Assistant to the Dean, she is an expert in handling diary management, appointment scheduling, travel arrangements, document preparation and financial oversight. Jacqueline's strong communication and interpersonal skills are evident in her interactions with students and other stakeholders. She is actively involved with the First-Year Experience Programme, assisting in multilingual academic support and student retention efforts. She manages strategic events, handles HR processes, and oversees marketing initiatives. Her proactive support, adaptability and commitment to her work makes her an invaluable member of the faculty, as she positively contributes to various projects and initiatives.

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*"I am intrinsically driven to excel, find meaning, be open to new things and to know I have honestly earned my keep."*

***"I never lose. I either win or learn."***

***- Nelson Mandela***

- Professional, Administrative and Support Award •  
Peromnes level 8 to 9



## Chenel Robey

System Engineer: ICT Services

Chenel, a system engineer in ICT Services, stands out for her creativity, innovation and commitment to helping others achieve common goals. Within her department, she has fostered an ethic of care and influenced a culture of high performance. Her exceptional personal brand of high achievement means she consistently exceeds service standards for internal clients. She is dedicated to resolving issues on systems that she oversees, often working outside of regular business hours, until the matter is fixed. She also willingly assists other ICT sections with heavy workloads. Chenel also creatively migrated Departmental SharePoint sites and Module sites to Office 365. Her relentless pursuit of finding solutions, high work ethic and positive influence is to be commended.

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*"Nothing is impossible; get on with it and do it even when no one is looking."*

***"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."***

***Nelson Mandela***

- Professional, Administrative and Support Award •  
Peromnes level 5 to 7



## Denise Schael

### Senior Manager External Opportunities: Research Support and Management

As a senior research manager, Denise is recognised for her exceptional service, dedication, leadership, and high performance as a key employee within the Department of Research Support and Management. She has shown excellent communication skills, providing crucial support to early career academics, and in managing externally funded projects. Denise also introduced and developed processes and systems to serve the research community more efficiently. She also initiated various new projects, including the drafting of an external funding guide, and coordinated internal expressions of interest, and streamlined contract processing. Her ability to draft reports, ensure due diligence processes for funders and contribute towards research strategy and implementation plans have greatly enhanced the work of department. In addition, she has graciously and effectively served as Acting Director of the Department serving on various committees to ensure continuity and ongoing excellence within the broader Research Office.

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*"Celebrate every win, no matter how big or small,  
and find the 'sparkle' in each day."*

***"A winner is a dreamer who never gives up."  
Nelson Mandela***



# CREATIVE OUTPUT AWARDS

Awards are given for exceptional creative research outputs emanating from the fields of fine arts and visual arts; music; theatre, performance and dance; design; film and television and literary arts.





## David Bester

### Musical Performance

"I explored connections, parallels, and contrasts between the style of visual arts, architecture and product design known as Art Deco, and violin repertoire composed around the turn of the 20th century," says David, a senior lecturer in music and performing arts. The project focused on theme-based recital programming, and its implications for both breaking with traditions and reinventing historic performance practices. Concepts from the visual arts were also translated to their equivalent stylistic and aesthetic counterparts in music. The idiosyncrasies of composer-performers, folk music, and Roma fiddle techniques, which inspired this music through embodiment and imitation, were explored. The project culminated in four live recitals, performed alongside pianist José Dias at concert venues around South Africa in March 2022.

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*"An approach driven by an insatiable sense of curiosity and infused with care remains fundamental in the pursuit of excellence."*

***"The unrelenting pursuit of your goal and a commitment to excellence leads to success."***



## Subeshini Moodley and Tarryn Rennie

### Online Archival Repository

The Media and Communication Department had sufficient staff and student work required for online and blended learning, but they needed a consolidated online resource or space where this work could be accessed. Thus, the idea for an e-book online repository was born, providing an archive of staff and student work. The repository idea was facilitated and coordinated by media and communication associate professor Subeshini Moodley and lecturer Tarryn Rennie to provide staff and students with a pool of material from which to draw practical examples during the online teaching and learning sessions, as well as a space for showcasing their work. The online repository can therefore be viewed as a composite curated publication or an archive exhibiting several outputs produced by departmental staff and students during the year.

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*“When creativity and a common social purpose meet contextual needs, innovative solutions are born. Dare to think ‘differentintelligently!’”*

***“To achieve excellence in big things, develop the habit in little things.”***

# ENGAGEMENT AWARDS

The Engagement awards are divided into individual,  
project and team awards.





## Noluvo Rangana and the Beacons of Hope Project

This study, led by Noluvo Rangana in Academic Administration, is funded by an NRF research grant project aimed at transforming schools into “beacons of hope” in poor working-class communities. A critical participatory action lens was applied to existing school communities in the Eastern Cape as part of the work of the Centre for the Community School (CCS). The CCS in the Faculty of Education interacts with multiple stakeholders through teaching and learning, engagement, and scholarship. Alternative approaches, relevant and responsive to the realities of under-served community schools, needed to be developed. Together with the study participants, the CCS co-generated guidelines supporting continual critical reflection, collaborative learning and focusing on best practices for transformative engagement. A framework on how the research methodology can be used in an African context has also been produced.

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*“Love is the driving force behind all my actions; conducting engagement work is impossible without a genuine affection for people.”*



## Thomas Terblanche and the Muir Bicentennial Project

In 2022, Muir College celebrated its bicentenary. History and politics lecturer Thomas serves on the school's alumni association, the Old Muirite Union, which played a significant part in organising the 200-year celebrations. Thomas led the scholar connection portfolio, conceiving and launching a community interactive booklet, titled *200 Life and Leadership Lessons*. The team encouraged old Muirites, friends of the school and influential leaders across all sectors of society, to share their contributions in the booklet. The completed booklet was presented to grade 12 students at a special event at the Kariega (Uitenhage) school, where educator Professor Jonathan Jansen was a guest speaker. The booklet is to be distributed to as many schools as possible in the surrounding areas.

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*"Driven by my passion and calling to serve humanity, I believe academic impact arises when we centre communities in knowledge creation."*



## Magda Minguzzi and the First Indigenous Peoples Leaders Partnership

Tangible and intangible indigenous heritage in South Africa and the Indigenous Knowledge system of the built environment, is the focus of this Architecture senior lecturer and professor. Since 2015, Magda's research, conducted together with her working group, consisting of First Nations Chiefs, community members, students and staff, has been on promoting cultural re-appropriation. The focus is on reconnecting the First Peoples with their heritage sites, reformulating the indigenous narrative and restoring indigenous culture and identity. This work also involves new knowledge, decolonising the higher education curriculum, bridging the gap between indigenous communities and academia, and fostering equity and inclusivity.

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*"Our academia must be relevant to society's needs; our community engagement is crucial to create a relevant 'third space' for all of us."*



## Isabel van Gend and STEM in Action

STEM in ACTION is a comprehensive Physical Science and Mathematics intervention programme for learners and educators in and around Nelson Mandela Bay. Activities involve both educators and learners from Grade 3 to 12, with educator development and academic support to learners in Physical Science and Mathematics. Learners and educators from Grade 9 to 12 are exposed to career exploration activities. In 2022, the STEM in ACTION team engaged with 74 schools, involving 166 educators, 1451 parents and 18 280 learners - or an overall total of 19 897 participants - through their projects. The initiative comprises seven projects, several conducted face-to-face and others directly with educators, who then interact with learners, using teaching and learning materials supplied by STEM in ACTION. Their work plays a vital role in enhancing STEM education in the community.

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*"It takes a village to raise a child. Our success is the result of the combined efforts of our team, the educators, parents, and learners."*





## Subeshini Moodley and Tarryn Rennie and the Online Repository for Creative and Research Outputs

The Media and Communication Department had sufficient staff and student work required for online and blended learning, but they needed a consolidated online resource or space where this work could be accessed. Thus, the idea for an e-book online repository was born, providing an archive of staff and student work. The repository idea was facilitated and coordinated by media and communication associate professor Subeshini Moodley and lecturer Tarryn

Rennie to provide staff and students with a pool of material from which to draw practical examples during the online teaching and learning sessions, as well as a space for showcasing their work. The online repository can therefore be viewed as a composite curated publication or an archive exhibiting several outputs produced by departmental staff and students during the year.

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*“When creativity and a common social purpose meet contextual needs, innovative solutions are born. Dare to think ‘differintelligently!’”*



## Dreyer Bernard and the Industrialisation of Friction Stir Welding Project

At eNtsa, the research and engineering teams focus on completing the “technology readiness lifecycle,” integrating innovations into the market. However, the development and implementation phases emphasise that research and product development continue. Friction Stir Welding (FSW) was a key research area at the Automotive Components Technology Station (now eNtsa) in the early 2000s. Over 11 years, the research and

engineering knowledge culminated into the design and build of a production-ready prototype FSW platform for GRW, a leading South African tanker and trailer manufacturer. This achievement demonstrates its ability by showcasing the transfer of research knowledge to a production environment. The project illustrates the continuous development of the process and platform, leading to the successful production of 76 trucks and many more expected.

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*“Our passion for excellence drives us to take ownership, remain customer focused, and provide innovative solutions through teamwork, integrity, and respect.”*



## Andrea Govender and the Alumni Initiative: Perception vs Reality

A recent Accountancy doctoral study highlighted a gap between perception and reality for accounting graduates entering the working world. In attempting to bridge this divide, the Alumni Talk Initiative was launched, featuring recorded conversations between School of Accounting alumni and Alumni Talk coordinators. Potential gaps were exposed between what is taught at higher education institutions and what the workplace demands. Greater attention was also given to life skills

needed for the working environment. Videos capturing this was well received on the School of Accounting's social and other media sites. The initiative expanded to involve Top Achiever Initiative students and identified student assistants in the Business and Economic Sciences Faculty, creating a live talk show atmosphere. It further evolved internationally, with alumni from Namibia and Botswana participating in a "Beyond the Classroom" component in an international webinar.

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*"A group of people working together is a cluster, while those working towards a passion and shared vision, is a team."*





## Julien de Klerk and the eNtsa Automotive Localisation Testing (ALT) Programme

The eNtsa Automotive Localisation Testing (ALT) Programme facilitates access to world-class testing of materials, products and processes for local automotive component manufacturers. The programme boosts Eastern Cape manufacturers by supporting the reliable production of high-quality products for local and international automotive supply chains. It operates through two key initiatives. Firstly, it creates funded short-learning and work-integrated-learning opportunities for Eastern Cape youth (18 to 35 years) entering the

automotive manufacturing, and prepares senior Mandela University engineering students for the industry. Secondly, the programme provides free product testing support to SME industry beneficiaries, especially Eastern Cape manufacturers and Black-owned/female-owned/youth-owned companies. Funded support is possible through the Automotive Industry Development Centre Eastern Cape (AIDC-EC) and the Technology Station Programme (TSP) funded by TIA and DSI.

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*“Every success starts with taking the first step and making today, ‘day one’ of the journey, instead of talking about ‘one day’.”*

# INNOVATION AWARDS

These awards recognise innovation excellence during 2023 but which may also be the culmination of a period of sustained innovation excellence over a number of years.



## Gaathier Mahed



The effective use and monitoring of water in soil, which has major implications for agricultural activities and therefore food security, is at the centre of Gaathier's research. This senior lecturer in Geosciences has, with his team, developed an innovative growing box, equipped with sensors to regulate itself. This means the soil maintains optimal moisture levels and the box's temperature is regulated to grow herbs and vegetables in the best way possible. Essentially, the box is a green house on wheels that can monitor itself. Imagine, he says, a farm on wheels in an urban setting – one that can grow anything all year around.

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*"Life is not about what happens to you. It is about how you react to what happens to you and in turn use the opportunity that has been presented to you for your own growth."*

***"Excellence is not an act, but a habit."***



## Farouk Smith and the Distractor for Osteogenesis of Hand Bones team

The mechatronics team has been conducting research on the development of novel surgical techniques and automatic devices for bone regeneration and tissue engineering applications. The developed medical device is a novel automatic surgical piece of equipment for reconstruction of hand bones. There are different limitations and drawbacks associated with conventional reconstruction techniques. By using the developed device for hand bone reconstruction, the treatment time is reduced, treatment condition is improved, and the outcome of the treatment is enhanced. This innovation can be used worldwide, positively impact public health, and improve quality of human life.

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*"We live for a purpose. Change the world and make it a better place for humans and their future generations."*

***"Consistency is what transforms average into excellence."***



## Carla Kampman and the InnoVenton, Downstream Chemical Technology Station team

Globally, microalgae are gaining prominence as a renewable bio-resource for producing feed, food, fuels, nutraceuticals, and fertilisers. In the last 15 years, the InnoVenton team has developed expertise in cultivating multi-system, multi-species microalgal biomass and converting them into marketable products and fuels, such as Coalgae®,

(low-smoke fuel), phycocyanin (food colouring), fish feed (protein source) and fertilisers (bio-stimulant, algae-manure). The key objective is to use microalgae as a novel, renewable feedstock, aligning with the bioeconomy strategy, fostering sustainable economic, social and environmental development through bio-innovation and skills transfer.

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*“Hard work and determination only take you so far. It’s conviction that makes all the difference.”*



# FACULTY EMERGING EXCELLENT TEACHER AWARDS

These awards recognise excellence in the previous calendar year but acknowledge that excellence evolves. As such, lecturers with a record of ongoing progress are also considered and recognised in these awards.





## Storm Watson

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

Storm, a lecturer in Business Management, makes it a priority to design his modules and lectures in a way that caters for various learning styles, enabling students to be involved with the module content that suits their individual learning preferences. Through his student-centred approach, Storm is hopeful that this will enhance curiosity, creativity and a love of learning within each student. He believes an inclusive and supportive environment empowers students to become active participants in their own education. He believes students can develop problem-solving skills and the ability to collaborate effectively, which prepares them for success in both their academic studies, the world of work and their personal life.

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*“Every student can learn, just not on the same day or in the same way.”*

***“It is in your hands to make a better world for all.”***

***Nelson Mandela***



## Tarryn Lovemore

Faculty of Education

“Teaching is a calling, my calling,” says Tarryn, whose teaching philosophy emanates from her passion for education. While she strives to be an expert in her field, by keeping up with trends, she recognises that her role is to help her students develop confidence to participate in their future workplace. The Education lecturer believes a safe learning environment and clear communication are key to building trust. By embracing education technology tools, Tarryn keeps her students actively engaged in lectures and multiple modes of representations, to assist them in making sense of concepts. Reflecting on her own teaching helps her to be a lifelong learner. “What a privilege it is to share my passion with future teachers of this country!”

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*“Learning from others and discovering while teaching is the most rewarding experience.”*

***“The harder you work for something the better you will feel when you achieve it.”***



## Jacqueline Maholo

Faculty of Law

“Much of my teaching approach is informed by my own personal lived experience as a black female academic. Lived experiences remind us to revisit the past curricula and use this as a foundation to reconstruct learning in a world that is constantly changing,” says Jacqueline, a lecturer in Mercantile Law. Teaching through the lense of her own lived experience allows her to empower students to take risks, step up in tough times, face down the bullies and lift the downhearted. She says education is much more than just acquiring knowledge. “It is a powerful tool to validate our identities, unlock our true potential and change the status quo for future generations.”

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*“It’s not only about what you learn ...  
but what you do with what you have  
learned. The choice is ultimately yours.”*

***“Mindset is what separates the best from  
the rest.”***

# FACULTY EXCELLENT TEACHERS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The recipients of these awards are recognised for their significant, sustained and rigorous commitment to teaching; their innovation, creativity and imagination and the positive and humanising impact of their teaching on students. In short, these teachers embody excellence of the profession and calling.





## Ayanda Simayi

Faculty of Education

Ayanda, a lecturer in Education, grounds her science teaching in the recognition and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). An example is the illuminating engagement between students on the confusion of “one tube on the neck” of a slaughtered animal. Through discussions involving IK and multiple languages, students shared that trachea is *uqhoqhoqho* in isiXhosa, *lugpyp* in Afrikaans, windpipe in simple English and is “attached to the food tube, the oesophagus.” The interaction between IK and multilingualism therefore enhances thinking and understanding accurate human anatomy and physiology. Ayanda also incorporates assessments that integrate IK-multilingual concepts to highlight how language and cultural experiences contribute value to learning about school science.

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*“Think, use the beauty and knowledge of our culturally rich rural villages to fuel transformation in science education.”*

***“Dream big. Work hard. Make it happen.”***

• Faculty Excellent Teacher of the Year •



## Tanya Wagenaar

Faculty of Law

Lecturers and students are equal partners in the process of acquiring knowledge and developing skills, believes Tanya, a lecturer in Private Law. Her teaching philosophy centres around creating an inclusive environment in which students can gain critical thinking and problem-solving skills that will serve to empower and embolden them to make a difference in our society. Learning and teaching is dynamic, especially within the discipline of law, which is itself constantly evolving and as such, she employs active teaching methods to make learning a stimulating, challenging and interactive experience, while trying to instil a lifelong curiosity that extends beyond the classroom.

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*"To teach is to practice optimism."*

***"You will never be ready. Just start."***

## Leizel Williams

Faculty of Science



“Giving back to the discipline I love is one of the principal motivations inspiring my teaching. Complexity thinking is an essential attribute currently, and I want to inspire my students through challenging their ideas beyond the curriculum,” says Leizel, a lecturer in Geosciences. Holistic thinkers are needed for a sustainable world and therefore, Leizel uses several research tools, from arts-based methodologies to cellphone apps, to create an engaging, interactive and empathetic classroom, stimulating curiosity and critical thinking. She is fascinated by creative pedagogical approaches and uses various grading models, active learning strategies and technical tools, to entice the modern student to be more engaged. She thoroughly enjoys mentoring, supervising and teaching the next generation of the Earth’s custodians.

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*“I want to nurture spatial awareness through facilitating student growth and development as responsible Earth stewards, in this super complex world.”*

***“Never underestimate the power you have to take your life in a new direction.”***



# FACULTY EMERGING RESEARCHER AWARDS

These awards seek to promote, recognise and rewards research excellence among new, emerging researchers across the faculties.





## Thobekile Qabhobho

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

The research of Thobekile, a lecturer in economics, highlights the importance of econometric modelling in acquiring a deeper empirical grasp of critical economic issues. These include issues in the Southern African Development Community region and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), such as the selection of suitable exchange rate policies, energy prices' instabilities, exchange rate volatility, geopolitical risks, global economic uncertainties, country-specific economic uncertainties, high capital mobility, monetary policy and challenges of economic integration. Research areas include international trade, international finance, applied econometrics, monetary economics and macroeconomics.

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*"Education is a means of emancipation; those who invest in it will undoubtedly flourish."*

***"Your greatness is not what you have.  
It's what you give."***



## Zakhile Somlata

Faculty of Education

South Africa is rich in terms of linguistic diversity and universities are no exception, says senior lecturer in Education, Zakhile, whose research advocates for the promotion of multilingualism in all academic domains. In addition, he wishes to promote a practical elevation of previously indigenous African languages as languages of research, learning and teaching in higher education. The implementation of language policies in institutions of higher education is at the centre of this research. He believes this needs to be embraced to build unity and social cohesion in South Africa. Universities, as the centres of knowledge, research, and innovation, are strategically placed to inculcate the culture of inclusiveness, linguistic heterogeneity, and equity, to redress linguistic imbalances of the past.

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*“The optimal utilisation of linguistic diversity has a great potential to alleviate unemployment, inequality and poverty in South Africa.”*

***“Strength lies in differences; not in similarities.”***

**Stephen Covey**



## Vuyolwethu Mdunyelwa

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

The lack of secure programming knowledge among programmers results in vulnerabilities on the software applications they programme. The research of Vuyolwethu, a lecturer in software engineering, focuses on improving programmers' knowledge and behaviour towards secure programming. His ongoing research looks at the holistic secure programme educational process and the development of a model to improve secure programming knowledge among programmers. Various elements of generic process models have been investigated to identify suitable elements for developing such a model.

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*"In order to do something well, first improve what you have already done."*

***"Success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in, day out."***



## Johannes Sibeko

Faculty of Humanities

Johannes, a digital humanities lecturer and language analysis researcher, has played a significant role in creating the first automated syllabification system for a South African language. The system, crucial for recognising word sounds and pronunciation, automates the division of words into syllables. It is an important resource for teachers of literacy reading and language researchers. Johannes specialises in advancing low-resourced languages and the readability of texts in Sesotho. His research also involves creating computational tools for understanding and manipulating human language.

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*"I am driven by the thrill that comes with having a voice in the academic conversation."*

***"Success does not come from what you do occasionally. It comes from what you do consistently."***



## Mahlubandile Ntontela

Faculty of Law

As a lecturer in criminal and procedural law, Mahlubandile's research addresses societal needs by creating mechanisms that can accommodate previously marginalised community members during the presentation of evidence in court. The existing common law procedural rules often marginalise individuals with communication disabilities, necessitating augmentative or alternative communication systems. Mahlubandile's research spans several topics, such as domestic violence and presenting evidence in criminal courts. In South Africa, the criminal courts use procedural laws inherited from Roman-Dutch and English law (the common law) to hear evidence. His research proposes solutions to such challenges within the framework of human rights language.

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*"I always remind myself to be consistent and disciplined in whatever I do, and the rest will fall into place."*

***"Big things often have small beginnings."***



## Rao Appadu

Faculty of Science

Rao, an associate professor in mathematics, specialises in mathematical modelling, partial differential equations (PDEs) and fractional partial differential equations. His research is applied to the quantitative, qualitative, and numerical analysis of some models in science and engineering. It covers areas such as biofilm formation, predators/preys, oil spill and pattern formation in coral reefs. Rao works mainly with standard finite difference methods, composite methods, and nonstandard finite difference methods. He also uses numerical optimisation techniques to enhance results obtained from finite difference methods.

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*“Do your job to the best of your ability  
and stay focused, motivated.”*

***“Don’t decrease the goal.  
Increase the effort.”***

# FACULTY RESEARCHERS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

These awards seek to recognise and reward the top researchers within each faculty for their research excellence in 2023.







## Syden Mishi

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

Associate professor in economics, Syden Mishi, studies how and why economic agents make choices the way they do, especially when non-market and credence goods are involved and in situations which veer from what is rationally assumed. These insights guide economic interventionism to shape the choice of approach for more efficient decision-making. Behavioural and experimental techniques are used to bring psychology and biology into economics. They help us to understand every day economic decisions in finance, health, technology, education, labour market and natural and common resources. Syden collaborates with scholars from diverse disciplines, such as health sciences, information systems, aquatic biology and ecology for an integrated approach to knowledge development and in understanding behaviours around resource use for sustainability. His collaborative research is undertaken in ways that minimise our carbon footprint.

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*“There is always a better alternative explanation to the observed behaviour – take time to understand that.”*

***“Where focus goes, energy flows.”***



## Syden Mishi

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***“Work hard, dream big and never give up.”***

• Faculty Researcher of the Year •



## Anass Bayaga

Faculty of Education

Globally, students' cognitive engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields needs to be urgently developed. In Africa, access to computer application technologies that enhance human-computer interface (HCI) are increasingly limited across all socioeconomic statuses. Addressing this challenge, Anass, an associate professor in education, focuses on enhancing information processing (computational cognition) through adaptive technologies. His transdisciplinary research emphasises STEM cognitive enhancement, specifically neuro (cognitive) mathematics, computational cognition and decision making. Anass explores the mathematics/STEM connections linking pattern recognition, spatial visualisation/perception and information processing, to apply and enhance computational decision making and processes through (4IR) technologies.

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*"Because creation or nature is easily expressed in mathematical language, I doubt if the creator isn't a mathematician."*

***"Achievement is talent plus preparation."***



## Sijekula Mbanga

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Human settlements should be created as spaces of hope and opportunity for fostering equity across demographics. The research of Sijekula, an associate professor in human settlements development, aims to generate long-lasting solutions to bring about responsive housing and human settlement policies in South Africa and beyond. The global housing access crisis, exclusive and divided cities, climate change challenges and deepening poverty and socio-economic inequalities, also need to be addressed. The research contributes to urban and rural space dynamics, sustainable resource utilisation, policy efficacy, affordable housing, economic stimulation, and community benefits beyond mere services.

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*"We rise by lifting others. Our privilege is to serve others. We develop knowledge to benefit society and a cause bigger than us."*

***"Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."***



## Ilse Truter

Faculty of Health Sciences

Pharmacoepidemiology studies medicine use in large populations, assessing usage patterns, risks, and the benefits of different medicines through the analysis of large medicine databases. Ilse, a professor in pharmacy, also explores pharmacists' roles in healthcare delivery, using surveys and focus group discussions. Her recent research focused mainly on vaccines, primary health care services provided by pharmacists, and the treatment of mental health conditions. Ilse is also involved in work related to the medicine classification systems, at local and international levels. Apart from research capacity building, her goal is to strive to ensure that medicines are used rationally.

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*"Your dreams will ignite your passion that fuels your commitment to do what it takes to achieve excellence. Be curious and courageous!"*

***"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."***



## Leah Ndimurwimo

Faculty of Law

Armed conflicts, compounded by natural and man-made disasters, culminate in cross-border mass migration, asylum-seeking and a perpetual refugee crisis. The research of senior lecturer and professor in Law, Leah, focuses on refugee and migration studies. It strives to respond to the socio-economic and human rights challenges plaguing the African continent, subsequently redressing social inequalities through laws and policies. Since the advent of independence, many African states inherited and adopted the rule of law based on colonial models. This perpetuated exclusionary practices, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance among Africans as affirmed in the Durban Declaration of 2001.

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*“Search for the unknown, think critically, overcome barriers and inspire the world around you.”*

***“Fall in love with the process of becoming the very best version of yourself.”***

• Faculty Researcher of the Year •



## Janine Adams

Faculty of Science

Blue carbon ecosystems and their responses to climate change, particularly focusing on estuaries, form the centre of Janine's research. For this professor of botany, estuary conservation, management and restoration is a key research theme that is aligned with the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and Ocean Science. Her research bridges the science-policy-practice continuum, which means her findings are used by a variety of influential stakeholders. Janine's research uses a socio-ecological systems' approach to communicate findings. Postgraduate training has improved her capacity to manage shallow water ecosystems effectively, thereby ensuring that the multitude of services provided by these ecosystems, benefit society directly.

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*"Innovative research and capacity building bring hope for marine and coastal ecosystem restoration."*

***"Work to become, not to acquire."***

# RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARDS

These awards go to those individuals whose research has positively impacted Nelson Mandela University and society over a sustained period of time.







## Magda Minguzzi

Architecture

Tangible and intangible indigenous heritage in South Africa and the Indigenous Knowledge system of the built environment, is the focus of this Architecture senior lecturer and professor. Since 2015, Magda's research, conducted together with her working group, consisting of First Nations Chiefs, community members, students and staff, has been on promoting cultural re-appropriation. The focus is on reconnecting the First Peoples with their heritage sites, reformulating the indigenous narrative and restoring indigenous culture and identity. This work also involves new knowledge, decolonising the higher education curriculum, bridging the gap between indigenous communities and academia, and fostering equity and inclusivity.

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*"Our academia must be relevant to society's needs; our community engagement is crucial to create a relevant 'third space' for all of us."*

***"It's a beautiful day to go after your dreams."***

# Anass Bayaga

## Education



Globally, students' cognitive engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields needs to be urgently developed. In Africa, access to computer application technologies that enhance human-computer interface (HCI) are increasingly limited across all socioeconomic statuses. Addressing this challenge, Anass, an associate professor in education, focuses on enhancing information processing (computational cognition) through adaptive technologies. His transdisciplinary research emphasises STEM cognitive enhancement, specifically neuro (cognitive) mathematics, computational cognition and decision making. Anass explores the mathematics/STEM connections linking pattern recognition, spatial visualisation/perception and information processing, to apply and enhance computational decision making and processes through (4IR) technologies.

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*"Because creation or nature is easily expressed in mathematical language, I doubt if the creator isn't a mathematician."*

***"If the plan does not work, change the plan but never the goal."***

# NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY EMERGING RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The recipient of this award is selected from the Faculty Emerging Researcher of the Year winners and is announced at the event.



# NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This individual, selected from the faculty winners, is the most highly recognised in relation to the impact that their outstanding research has had for Nelson Mandela University and society more broadly.

**The winner is announced at the event.**



**"EDUCATION IS THE  
MOST POWERFUL  
WEAPON WHICH YOU  
CAN USE TO CHANGE  
THE WORLD."**

