

Word of Welcome – Autumn Graduations April 2025

Chancellor of the Tshwane University of Technology, Dr Gloria Serobe

Chairperson of the Council of the University, Mr Ivan Ka-Mbonani

Esteemed Members of Council and its Committees

Members of Senate

Members of the Executive and Institutional Management Committee

Representatives of labour formations

Students and members of the ISRC and its constituent sub-structures

TUT Alumni

Industry partners and community stakeholders

Esteemed graduands, parents, guardians and friends

Manene na manenekazi, bo mme le bo ntate

Ladies and gentlemen

Sanibonani! Dumelang! Goeie more (middag)! Lotshani! Molweni!

Xewani! He-Nndaa!

On behalf of the Chancellor of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Dr Gloria Serobe, I welcome you to this graduation ceremony, which is but one of our series of the 2025 Autumn Graduations.

Of all the ceremonies that take place during any university's academic year, none is as significant, and none is as prestigious as a graduation ceremony. Such is the importance of graduation ceremonies that they alone are presided over by the titular head of the University, namely, the Chancellor. It is the Chancellor who confers all degrees and awards all diplomas and certificates in the name of the University.

The Tshwane University of Technology is fully appreciative of the stony road that many of our 64 000 students have trod on the journey towards graduation day. We are aware of the many rivers our students have had to cross; the mountains they have had to scale and the hurdles they have had to negotiate. TUT students are some of the feistiest and the most resilient in the higher education sector.

The late rapper, Tupac Shakur, might as well have been speaking of TUT students when he penned his rhetorical and metaphorical poem titled: *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*. The poem reads like this:

*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's laws wrong,
it learned 2 walk without having feet
Funny it seems but by keeping its dreams
it learned 2 breathe fresh air
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
When no one even cared*

In this graduation, we too wish to say, long live to the students who refused to give up. Long live to the students who have taken advantage of tiny cracks of chance and opportunity to emerge from the hard concrete of life.

Since its establishment in January 2004, TUT has fundamentally changed the game of higher education in this country. Today, we can confidently say that the Tshwane University of Technology has become **that** university, which only TUT can be in this country and the world: The People's University; the University that makes knowledge work; the

University that is moving from good to great at every level in every way; the Hub of Artificial Intelligence. TUT is at once a bridge where academia meets industry and *the* entrepreneurial University of South Africa. From first year to first job, we train our students to find and to invent jobs.

Some of the key attributes of TUT graduates are:

- a) future readiness and an aptitude for entrepreneurship;
- b) the will to harness and leverage technology and AI to solve the wicked problems of our time;
- c) commitment to the prevention, combating and elimination of gender-based violence;
- d) commitment to environmental sustainability; and
- e) a thoroughgoing commitment to ethical conduct at all times.

Only graduates who exhibit and practice the above attributes will contribute to the noble goals of our National Development Plan. Africa we want, as spelt out in the Agenda 2063 of the African Union. TUT graduates have what it takes to fulfil the Pan-African vision of the late President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah – the vision of an industrialised, energy-secure, food-secure, technology-driven, and disease-free Africa.

TUT students are trained and coached, from the very beginning, to get the basics right, namely, not to waste a single day of learning, not to lose a single week of studying, not to forfeit a single month of research, and never not squander the golden opportunity presented by each semester.

From the first year to the final year, TUT students are taught to work purposefully, constantly, and consistently.

We were not the least surprised when the Department of Communication and Digital Technologies selected the Tshwane University of Technology together with the University of Johannesburg to join it as lead institutions in the founding of the Artificial Intelligence Institute of South Africa. Our participation in the Artificial Intelligence Institute of South Africa is especially focussed on - motor industry AI, farming and food production AI, 4iR manufacturing, AI in tourism, AI in Transport, AI in health and telecommunications – areas in which we already have considerable capacity.

We delighted to announce that during the 2025 Spring Graduation a total of eleven thousand three hundred and eighty-nine students will graduate:

- Nine thousand nine hundred and twenty-two undergraduate students
- One thousand two hundred and sixty-five postgraduate (below master's) students
- One hundred and sixty-three Master's students
- Thirty-nine PhD students

It is with a sense of absolute confidence and pride that we release today, the brand-new list of our excellent and future-ready graduates.

I would like to make a special appeal to all our guests today; please make donation pledges to TUT. I am particularly appealing for donations into the TUT Bursary and Scholarship Fund, which is dedicated to assisting academically gifted but economically disadvantaged TUT students.

The late former President Nelson Mandela had the likes of our graduands in mind when he said, and I quote:

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

Accordingly, to the ‘daughters of peasants’ and the ‘sons of mine workers’, and ‘children of farm workers’ who are graduating today, we say: go on and make your knowledge work for your country and the world.

We congratulate you and we say, **Halaaala!**

I thank you.