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UCT Online High School announces avid educationalist as Director and Principal

DOWNLOAD: [Images and video clip by new UCT OHS Principal, Yandiswa Xhakaza.](#)

In July this year, the University of Cape Town (UCT) launched an online high school, becoming the first university on the African continent to extend its expertise and impact to the secondary schooling market through an innovative online modality.

The public response has exceeded all expectations, indicative of the global need for innovation in the education sector. Across South Africa's cities and towns – and the African continent – parents, learners and teachers have shown interest in this revolutionary education offering, with over 4 000 learner applications for January 2022 and climbing.

Bolstering the launch announcement, the university is proud to confirm the appointment of its UCT Online High School (OHS) Director and Principal, Ms Yandiswa Xhakaza, who is an avid educationalist.

Yandiswa experienced the dire consequences of an unequal education system as a young girl. These inequalities left an imprint in her life so profound that she has dedicated her whole life to finding effective solutions to provide high-quality education at scale.

Starting out as an English teacher in 2010, Yandiswa has grown tremendously and has continuously upskilled herself, travelling the world to learn best practice from other countries. She brings a wealth of knowledge, having started and operated a school in Centurion in 2017. She is a prolific leader and comes from leading a national literacy organisation, the Nal'ibali Trust, where she served as CEO.

She holds a Bachelor of Education (Wits University), Postgraduate Diploma in Management (Wits University) and a Master of Business Administration (University of Pretoria). Her incredible operational skills and large-scale implementation capabilities are both going to be resourceful in her new role as UCT OHS Director and Principal.

Yandiswa believes that UCT OHS is exactly what this country needs, offering high-quality education at scale. She explains: "Online education in our context will always come with its own fair share of challenges as a developing country. The digital divide is significant and we have to work around the digital barriers such as poor network coverage, data costs, access to devices and computer literacy to mention a few. This is exactly the type of challenge I am excited about, because when we get this right, it will be a massive win for all of us."

Yandiswa begins her tenure as the Director and Principal of the UCT OHS from November 2021 ahead of its first official cohort, cementing her role as its leader from an early onset.

"I am delighted to be joining the UCT Online High School team pioneering such amazing work and I look forward to breaking barriers and working towards the accomplishment of something so deeply personal to me, a course I have been preparing my whole life to chart forth."

UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng welcomed the appointment. "Yandiswa embodies what we as an institution stand for: building an inclusive society using the knowledge and resources that we possess. With her leading us on this journey we will be building a more equitable and sustainable social order and impact our young people from an early age to prepare them for the demands of higher education and society. Her experiences and passion are just what we need to make a success of the UCT Online High School, which is a key project of the university's Vision 2030 and shows how we are committed to unleashing human potential across our society."

She added: "Yandiswa's commitment to education and willingness to continuously better herself for the good of her students is evident from her experience as a teacher, school leader and educationalist. We could not be happier that she will be joining the UCT OHS team and leading us on this incredible journey that is anchored in our Vision 2030 strategy to unleash human potential for a fair and just society and on our three pillars of transformation, excellence and sustainability. She is acutely aware of the challenges we face as a nation when it comes to democratising education and she has proven over the years how she is able to begin to bridge the divide."

Adding support in her career move, acting chairperson of the Nal'ibali Trust, Kay Lala-Sides, said: "We know that Yandiswa has a real passion for making high-quality education accessible to all South Africans. It is that passion that led her to Nal'ibali and it is the same passion that draws her to UCT's Online High School. During her time with us, Yandiswa worked with our executive team and the board to help the Nal'ibali campaign adapt to our changing world, strengthen systems and processes, and introduced cost-effective innovations that helped us deliver value at scale. We wish her well as she takes these experiences with her into her new role and look forward to opportunities to collaborate in the future."

ABOUT THE UCT ONLINE HIGH SCHOOL

The **UCT Online High School** ecosystem has been designed to service South African learners from a broad range of socioeconomic means. It offers a CAPS-aligned curriculum, and enables learners in grades 8-11 in any corner of the globe with the opportunity to study at a monthly fee of R2 095 per month, making it one of the most affordable private schools in the country. Grade 12 will be offered from 2023.

Admissions opened on 21 July 2021 and has been met with great interest ahead of school commencing in January 2022. Learners will benefit from the UCT Online High School's supported self-discipline model, which allows learners to pace their own learning and get high quality 1:1 tutoring from expert teachers and support coaches whenever they need it. Learners will also be prepared with a unique range of university and career preparation services and offerings.

In addition, the curriculum will be made available from January 2022 for free in an interactive online platform called the **Open UCT Free Curriculum**. Users of the free content will be issued a learner number to save their unique learning path and data, with unlimited logins permitted. Learners have full access to a self-paced curriculum where they can progress at their own pace through expert designed notes, videos, animations, simulations, practice assignments, quizzes and more. The interactive content is intuitively organised, and easily searchable, making it an excellent resource for teachers and learners around the country to benefit from. In its first year, the free curriculum will be released in increments per grade.

For more information, **live weekly webinars** are hosted with UCT Online High School Head of Culture Kieno Kammies and prospective parents, as well as monthly information sessions for families who've confirmed that they'll join in January, and for those wanting more details before applying. [Reserve a place at the weekly webinar.](#)

The Valentre Institute and UCT Online High School are currently **hiring over 300 new staff members** to help create the most impactful school in the country. [Access available positions.](#)

For more information on the UCT Online High School: www.uctonlinehighschool.com | admissions@uctohs.valentreonline.com | +2721 010 1350.

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***Note:** An opportunity for one-on-one interviews will be afforded on a first come, first serve basis. Interview slots will be allocated on the basis of pre-confirmation from media houses. For interview requests or further media queries contact Darryn Lee on darryn@leehousepr.com or 082 831 7256.*

ENDS

Issued on behalf of the UCT Online High School and Valentre Institute

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