

# The faculty of human sciences welcomes the new executive dean

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The Vaal University of Technology (VUT) is proud to announce the appointment of Professor Michael Kgomotso Masemola, an NRF B-rated researcher with considerable international recognition.



*Professor Michael Kgomotso Masemola, PhD (Sheffield, UK), NRF B-rated researcher*

With BA (WITS), BA Hons (WITS), MA (Natal) and PhD (Sheffield, UK) degrees under his belt, Professor Masemola assumed duties on Monday, 1 August 2022, as the executive dean of the faculty of human sciences. Prof. Masemola joins VUT from Unisa where he held a similar position of being the executive dean of the college of human sciences that has a student enrolment of 52,000 students, where he developed and led a team that boasts 86 NRF-rated researchers as well as 497 staff with PhDs who support research Niche Areas.

As part of his future-proofing approach, aligned to priorities identified in the VUT Strategic Plan 2020-2024, Prof. Masemola places special emphasis on data-driven human capacity development for both

academics and administrative and support staff. He is poised to now lead mentorship, innovation and equity-based transformation that is reflected in curriculum reform and demographic diversity. In his governance outlook, administrative and support staff - like academics - must enjoy career growth at VUT through deliberate pathway programmes that, amongst others, will see admin staff geared towards management qualifications such as the MBA or Master of Management or Master of Administration whilst academics in the faculty of human sciences will be immediately primed towards PhD attainment.

This will form the bedrock on which Prof. Masemola will continue to champion the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the AU Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" priorities and the National Development Plan 2030 targets in the context of VUT's contribution to the National Innovation System. This is consistent with the strategic vision of VUT, considering that these interventions resonate with VUT's commitment to meeting its annual performance targets relating to knowledge production that is inextricably tied to employment creation through research-led curriculum transformation on IT-savvy platforms such as Vutela. Prof. Masemola believes in building digital competency for all. Students, admin staff as well as academics will benefit from the executive dean's intervention of improving VUT's performance culture by digital means. Besides upskilling and reskilling of all workers and students, for instance, Prof. Masemola believes that cybersecurity awareness is a baseline area of development for all at VUT's faculty of human sciences. Ditto for online tracking of PQM Viability, rollout of enrolment plans as well as performance management. This, he says, is the meeting point of performance culture with digital humanities. For him, this will allow VUT incredible purchase in the participation within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement opportunities for alumni, students and staff. Future-proofing is made thus.

At VUT Prof. Masemola will use his international exposure as an NRFB-rated full professor to also foster knowledge exchange and technology transfer, with a dedicated focus on commercialisation of industry-related solutions that are co-created with students in such a way that advances intelligent WIL participation. Professor Masemola has already set up prospects for collaborative exchange for staff and students in France's University of Paris Sorbonne, University of Toulouse and University of Paris-Saclay. This will include undergraduate students, emerging or upstart academics, as well as admin and support staff who wish to do bespoke short courses and modules abroad. He values partnerships with industry in the pursuit of addressing challenges in the domains of energy, climate change, decarbonisation, market volatility, the water crisis, poverty alleviation and access to higher education through engaged scholarship that feeds on VUT's Memoranda of Understanding with SETAs. Similarly, he will be assembling a team within the faculty of humanities to draw massive grants

that focus on digital humanities. He will involve staff from other faculties and units for strategic inputs and interdisciplinarity.

Notably, as part of his academic citizenship footprint, Prof. Masemola has leveraged his quality assurance leadership of the rollout of the National Doctoral Review in readiness for the Commonwealth of Learning Audit, which added a strong humanities bias as a member of the UCT Panel for the National Doctoral Review. Over and above adding value to VUT's programme accreditation processes, his involvement and participation in these platforms will undoubtedly contribute to the international positioning of VUT's faculty of human sciences. He plans to stimulate growth through the appointment of research chairs in the faculty of human sciences. Prof. Masemola says it is possible to activate, for example, a D&G chair of fashion design alongside a planned Zeiss Research chair in photography or even a proposed Tribeca/Edelman nb research chair of public relations. With these, the entire higher education sector will witness the improvement in the university's standing in world rankings such as the Shanghai Rankings, QS and Times Higher Education. Commensurately, VUT brand equity will gain more value as the staff with PhDs will increase within the hub of research chairs. It will have a knock-on effect, Prof. Masemola says, on Master and Doctoral supervisory capacity.

A renowned scholar with considerable international recognition as indicated by his NRF B-rating, Prof. Masemola is the author of the monograph book *South African Autobiography After Deleuze* (Brill & RODOPI, 2017). He is also a co-editor (with Liberty M. Hove) of *Strategies of Representation in Auto/biography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Recently, he contributed book chapters such as "Autobiography in Africa" in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: The Novel in Africa and the Atlantic World*, edited by Simon Gikandi (Oxford University Press, 2016).

A full professor of English Literature, Prof. Masemola has published in top-drawer journal articles locally and internationally. He holds the distinction of being internationally recognised through international keynote addresses and, as an example, an invitation by Professor Stephen Ross of York University to contribute to the prestigious *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. <https://www.rem.routledge.com/>.

Among several scholarly achievements, Professor Masemola has participated in the Trans-Atlantic Platform: Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World as a virtual panelist, adjudicating grant proposals from Europe, North America, and South America - at the behest the Research and Innovation Support and Advancement arm of the National Research Foundation. He has as recently as 2019 delivered papers at the Yan'an University's School of Marxism in China back-to-back with presentations at the University of Nairobi. All his international conference papers and keynote addresses - from Oxford University to Qatar University, from the University of the West Indies to Zurich University - have resulted in research outputs in esteemed publishing outlets, accredited journals and publishing presses. He is set to establish career developmental pathways in human sciences for staff such that it replicates this feat in respect of all VUT human sciences staff. As executive dean, Prof. Masemola will use strategic instruments of mentorship, mobility pathways, higher international conference participation and academic qualification improvement sabbatical leave. This will improve not only the qualifications profile of human sciences staff but also increase research productivity and citation metrics as envisaged in the VUT Strategic Plan 2020-2024.

As an executive dean and full professor who leads by example, Prof. Masemola continues to publish in accredited IBSS/ISS Journals of good standing. Some of his works published in 2020-21 include:

- Michael Kgomo Masemola "Enter the jargon: the intertextual rhetoric of Radical Economic Transformation following the logic of Demosthenes's oratory," *African Identities*, Vol 19, Issue 2, pp. 209-220 (2021) 1st Published online: 29 July 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2020.1796589>
- Michael Kgomo Masemola: "African Cultural Memory in Fred Khumalo's Touch my Blood and its Metafictional Para-texts" in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol 52, number 2 (2021), pp.103-122 first published online in September 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934720959389>

Prof. Masemola continues to play a leading role in creating a transformed and agile knowledge organisation that shape and influence all aspects of the knowledge enterprise with unwavering commitment to transformation, impact, excellence, and sustainability. His management innovation is exemplified by his novel praxis of eQuality, which he formulated when the sector was confronted by the Covid-19 pandemic. He has demonstrated that, more than ever, e-learning platforms are set

to equalise learning opportunities for students across the globe based on quality teaching and research. Prof. Masemola believes that this experience will contribute to the delivery of quality teaching and learning at VUT's Faculty of Human Sciences as envisaged in the VUT Strategic Plan 2020-2024.

The Vaal University of Technology will surely benefit immensely from Prof. Masemola's combined innovative leadership and governance as well as research expertise that, by his humble insistence, flow from the godliness of YHWH Elohim (Baruch Hashem).

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#### **Vaal University of Technology**

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