

# Foreign student numbers increase

According to Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), since 1994, the provisional number of international students in South Africa's 23 universities grew dramatically - from 12 600 in 1994, to more than 64 784 in 2010. About a quarter of these are studying postgraduate qualifications.



Experiencing a notable influx to its MBA programme is the [University of Cape Town \(UCT\) Graduate School of Business \(GSB\)](#), which this year has 17 international students enrolled, with more expected later in the year.

Foreign rankings are clearly an important draw card for foreign students in choosing an institution. UCT is the highest ranked African university in the QS World University Rankings, the *Times* Higher Education World University Rankings, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities and is home to some 4 300 international students from 104 countries, representing 20% of its student body.

Other South African universities report similar interest from international students; the University of Stellenbosch's website reports that 10% of its postgraduate students are foreign and Wits has over 2000 international students.

## Unique context for study

Another reason why students may come to South Africa is that the country can offer a unique context for study. Director of the UCT GSB and a foreign national, [Walter Baets](#), says that while different issues beset different countries, his mission as director has been to improve relevance and innovative business thinking. Placed within an emerging market context, the school is proving attractive to foreign students looking to do an MBA with a fresh insight into developing economies.

Baets believes that the GSB also offers something else unusual, which is a values-based approach to learning. "We're training future CEOs and whether it be here in Cape Town, or anywhere else in the world, unless you're working towards adding value to a society, then there is no point. You are equipped with the skills to make a difference and so it is your responsibility to do so. The skills we teach are universally applicable and necessary."

## Culture exchange

Recent improvements to both the infrastructure of South Africa and events, such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup, have only added to the choice of South Africa as a destination for students wishing to study in Africa. As a further draw card, South African cities such as Cape Town are being rated as amongst the world's top tourist destinations more and more often.

The GSB attempts to create a similarly thriving cultural environment. In early 2011, 21 students from the Dubai Men's College visited for a seminar, and observed that the school had as many divergent cultures as Cape Town itself, which for some of them was the most interesting and surprising aspect of the visit.

There is the consideration that culture shock might serve as an obstacle to student's classroom success but it is to South Africa's benefit that owing to its own history and multi-cultural population, adaption and acceptance of foreign cultures is surprisingly easy. Pranav Tandon, from Shimla India, is one of the international students who has made the journey to South Africa to study at GSB this year. He believes the different experiences and cultural backgrounds are in fact a great help and that the group work and discussions enable one to appreciate different perspectives, from a diverse demographic of people.

"An exchange student in our class from Cornell stated that the South African education was even better than that institution and I think that's a good indication of the standard of excellence that it upholds. The biggest difference I have seen from

education in India is in the processes, or the vehicle of learning. I'm used to education that relies more on the theoretical - but the university takes a very practical stance, which I believe is to tremendous benefit for the learner," he says.

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