

Bridging the gap

South Africa's youth unemployment rate is a serious challenge. Some estimates indicate that young people under 35 are three times less likely to be employed than those over 35.



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Catch-22 situation

While the primary purpose of universities and colleges is to prepare students for a career, not all courses prepare them for the world of work they will face. Many young people are simply unable to successfully enter the job market, because they lack experience and skills. Employers want graduates who can hit the ground running, and young people face the catch-22 of 'no experience, no job; no job, no experience'.

In order to overcome this problem, tertiary education institutions must help students bridge the gap between education and employment. This is precisely what UJ's department of commercial accounting endeavours to do.

Professional test of competency

In 2015, 135 third-year students studying towards UJ's diploma in accountancy were given the opportunity to write the South African Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT(SA)) professional test of competency exam and qualify for silver membership. To be allowed to do so, students first had to complete an accredited diploma in accounting and achieve an overall average of 60% for their final-year modules.

The professional test of competency exam tests their knowledge of work covered both for the AAT(SA) professional qualification and for their diploma.

Applying theory in a practical way

Speaking at the UJ commercial accounting department's merit and award ceremony, Nadine Kater, general manager, welcomed the new AAT(SA) members and put their achievement into perspective.

"In the first year, 1,000 students registered for the diploma in accountancy. By the third year, there were 700 students. When we approached UJ and joined in a partnership, we wanted to take students who had a pass mark of 60% in financial accounting 3 to embark on this programme. As a result, we registered 135 students on the

AAT(SA) programme in 2015. Ninety-nine of you wrote the accounting technician test of professional competence and today, we are pleased to welcome the 65 students who have proven that they can apply this theory in a practical way," she says.

Speaking about UJ's partnership with AAT(SA), Christo Ackermann, head of the department at UJ, adds that this programme greatly enhances the university's diploma course as it underpins the department's mission of "providing relevant career focused programmes that equip and prepare graduates to service diverse communities through their state of work readiness".

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