

UP 2026 Autumn Graduations: Nearly 40% of 13,000 graduates received financial support from UP

Funding higher education in South Africa cannot rest solely with government, funders or parents. It is a shared responsibility, carried across society by all who believe in enabling young people realise their potential through education.

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This is the stance of the University of Pretoria (UP), which has once again implemented a range of initiative to raise funds and provide financial support to the students who will be taking the stage during the 2026 Autumn Graduation season, taking place from Monday 4 May to Friday 29 May 2026.

Out of the 13 221 students graduating this month, approximately 6 405 (48.4%) received funding in various forms. The largest share of support within this group came from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The second-largest group, about 44.5%, was awarded UP-managed bursaries. In addition, UP's own funds supported around 37.4% of the students who received financial assistance, while external bursaries accounted for about 18% of the funded students.

“This reflects the University of Pretoria’s understanding that financial support goes beyond tuition, stationery and accommodation,” said Rikus Delpont, UP Spokesperson and Director of Institutional Advancement.

“The University’s contribution therefore includes a broader range of student support mechanisms, combining direct academic funding with additional forms of assistance such as nutrition support, psychosocial services and other interventions that enable students to succeed academically and complete their studies.”

Year after year, UP demonstrates that its role extends well beyond teaching and learning, to actively enable students to complete their studies. In 2024, UP provided financial support to 55% of the 12,511 students who graduated that autumn, while in 2025 nearly half of the 12,950 graduating students at the autumn ceremonies, about 6,270 (48.4%), reached the finish line with the help of financial assistance from the

University.

This consistent support reflects UP's ongoing commitment to student success and its efforts to ensure that financial barriers do not stand in the way of academic completion. This financial support is also seen in smaller graduation seasons in the spring and summer.

In another life-changing initiative in support of students, UP is set to launch its Degrees Delivered campaign, a targeted effort aimed at unlocking academic qualifications for graduates who have successfully completed their studies but are unable to graduate due to student debt.

The campaign seeks to mobilise the University community – including students, staff, alumni, donors and the public – to help clear this historical debt and enable these graduates to receive their qualifications.

“Each degree released represents more than a certificate; it represents a graduate able to enter the workforce, a family gaining access to new opportunity, and skills being unlocked for the benefit of South Africa's economy,” Delpont said. “In this way, the campaign is not only about clearing debt, but about unlocking immediate and measurable impact. Unlike longer-term funding initiatives, the Degrees Delivered campaign addresses a final and decisive barrier to graduation.”

By enabling students who have already met all academic requirements to access their qualifications, UP reinforces its broader commitment to student success, completion and social mobility, while also responding to national priorities around youth unemployment and economic participation.

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