

2025 QUARTER 4 ENGAGEMENT REPORT

PREPARED BY
MS PHUMZILE XULU
ENGAGEMENT PRACTITIONER

SUBMITTED BY
PROF FULUFHELO NEMAVHOLA
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR:
RESEARCH INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKIWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE



TABLE OF CONTENTS



Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	4
2. Key Focus Areas and Initiatives.....	6
2.1 Research Engagement	6
2.1.1 Highlights of Research Programmes, Grants, and Publications.....	6
2.2 Research Partnerships and Collaborations	9
2.2.1 National Collaborations	9
2.2.2 International Collaborations	10
2.2.3 Research Impact.....	12
2.2.4 ENVISION2030 Alignment	13
2.3 Research Events and Conferences hosted by DUT	15
2.4 Industry Collaboration	17
2.4.1 Collaborations with Industry Leaders and Organizations	17
2.4.2 Industry-specific Projects and Research.....	18
2.4.3 Knowledge Transfer and Technology Commercialization	20
2.5 Community and Social Engagement.....	21
2.5.1 Community Outreach and Development Programmes	21
2.5.2 Social Responsibility Projects.....	23
2.5.3 Partnerships with Local Communities and Organizations	24
2.6 International Partnerships	26
2.6.1 Collaborative Agreements with International Universities and Institutions	26
2.6.2 Student and Faculty Exchange Programmes	28
2.6.3 Global Research Initiatives and International Conferences	29
2.7 Innovation and Entrepreneurship	30
2.7.1 Innovation Hubs and Startup Incubators.....	30
2.7.2 Entrepreneurship Programmes and Competitions	32
2.7.3 Technological Advancements and Patents	33
3. THIRD-STREAM INCOME.....	36
4. ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES.....	38
5. IMPACT AND CONTRIBUTIONS	41
6. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	43
7. FUTURE OUTLOOK	45
8. CONCLUSION.....	47

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fourth quarter of 2025 marked a period of intensified delivery, institutional consolidation, and strategic engagement at Durban University of Technology (DUT). Guided by ENVISION2030, the University deliberately operationalized the Quad-Helix Partnerships model, integrating academia, industry, government, and community to advance innovation, strengthen teaching and research relevance, and deliver measurable societal and economic impact. This integrated approach enabled DUT to move beyond fragmented engagement, positioning the University as a co-creator of solutions within local, national, continental, and global ecosystems.

Academia: Knowledge Creation, Curriculum Transformation, and Research Excellence

Academic engagement remained the foundation of DUT's Quad-Helix ecosystem. Faculties, supported by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), advanced curriculum transformation through Project-Based Learning, Design Thinking, ethical AI integration, and Emerging Fields of Study, strengthening interdisciplinary learning and graduate readiness. Research institutes and faculty-based research entities expanded postgraduate supervision, interdisciplinary collaboration, and scholarly outputs, including publications in high-impact journals and contributions to international research platforms.

The Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology (IWWT) played a significant role in advancing applied research aligned with national and global sustainability priorities, combining postgraduate training, international collaboration, and solution-oriented research in water and wastewater innovation. Academic engagement across faculties ensured that research, teaching, and innovation were closely aligned with societal needs and institutional strategy.

DUT is a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 (MCU 2020), joining a global network of more than 1000 universities from over 90 countries, that have affirmed their commitment to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, integrity and the public responsibility of higher education. The historic signing ceremony took place at King's College London, one of the world's leading universities and host of this year's international MCU gathering. The event brought together higher education leaders from across the globe to reaffirm shared values that underpin the modern university.

Industry: Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development

Industry engagement focused on strengthening innovation pipelines, entrepreneurship development, and work-readiness. The Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) Directorate, together with Innobiz DUT Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation (CSERI), advanced technology development, incubation, and commercialization initiatives. Multiple innovations progressed

along the Technology Readiness Levels, supported by feasibility studies, intellectual property protection, and structured incubation programmes.

A major milestone was DUT becoming the first African institution to host the 2025 Global Innovation and Start-Up University (GISU) Entrepreneurship and Innovation Competition, resulting in international recognition for DUT studentpreneurs. Entrepreneurship programmes engaged students, alumni, and community-based SMMEs, contributing to enterprise development, job creation, and inclusive economic participation. Industry partnerships were further strengthened through applied research collaborations, professional skills development, and innovation ecosystem partnerships, including engagements facilitated through innovation hubs and social enterprises.

Government: Policy Alignment, Developmental Impact, and Public Value

Government partnerships played a critical enabling role across all engagement areas. Strategic collaboration with national departments, municipalities, public agencies, and diplomatic missions supported innovation, skills development, and Africa-centred internationalization. Initiatives facilitated through the International Education and Partnerships (IEP) Directorate strengthened alignment with national policy priorities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and Africa's Agenda 2063.

Applied research and innovation initiatives, including those led through IWWT and TTI, aligned with government priorities in water security, environmental sustainability, public health, youth development, and industrial innovation. These partnerships strengthened DUT's contribution to public value creation while enhancing institutional legitimacy and resource mobilization.

Community: Social Innovation, Inclusion, and Co-Creation

Community engagement remained integral to DUT's Quad-Helix approach, ensuring that innovation and knowledge creation translated into tangible social benefit. The Community Engagement (CE) Office, working with faculties, TTI, Innobiz, CSERI, and IEP,





The DUT DVC: RIE, Prof FuluFhelo Nemavhola with the distinguished guests at the GISU Opening Ceremony

coordinated community-linked learning, research, and outreach initiatives that supported schools, community-based enterprises, civil society organizations, and vulnerable groups.

Youth-focused initiatives such as entrepreneurship exposure programmes, Adopt-a-School engagements, and science and innovation outreach fostered early interest in innovation and higher education pathways. Social innovation initiatives advanced public health awareness, digital literacy, environmental education, and intercultural competence, including activities delivered through the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence and partnerships with community-based organizations. These engagements reinforced DUT's role as a trusted partner in social cohesion and inclusive development.

The strength of DUT's Quad-Helix Partnerships model is reflected in its integrated institutional outcomes. During 2025, the University generated approximately R80 million in quantified third-stream income across research, innovation, teaching and learning, internationalization, and philanthropic activities. This income was generated through contributions from innovation and incubation programmes, research funding, work-integrated learning and SETA-supported initiatives, international partnerships facilitated by IEP, professional development programmes, and philanthropic fundraising coordinated through institutional advancement structures.

These resources directly supported postgraduate training, student access and success, innovation development, community engagement programmes, and institutional capacity-building. Importantly, this figure excludes projected and unquantified income, indicating continued growth potential across multiple engagement streams.

Collectively, the fourth-quarter engagements of 2025 demonstrate DUT's growing institutional maturity as an engaged, innovative, and globally connected university. By embedding the Quad-Helix Partnerships model across its academic project - and enabling collaboration between faculties, research institutes, and strategic support units - the University strengthened its innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, expanded Africa-centred internationalization, enhanced research capacity, and delivered measurable societal impact.

While systemic challenges highlighted areas for institutional strengthening, they also clarified pathways for system optimization, capacity development, and future readiness. These achievements affirm DUT's commitment to sustainability, inclusivity, and developmental impact, positioning the University to continue advancing transformative scholarship, innovation, and engagement in alignment with ENVISION2030.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The final quarter of 2025 marked a period of sustained implementation, institutional consolidation, and coordinated engagement across Durban University of Technology (DUT). During this phase, faculties, research institutes, and strategic support units worked collaboratively to advance the University's agenda in research excellence, innovation and entrepreneurship, curriculum transformation, internationalization, industry collaboration, and community engagement. These efforts reflect an institution increasingly operating as an integrated system, capable of translating strategy into action at scale.

Aligned with ENVISION2030, fourth-quarter activities were underpinned by a deliberate focus on sustainable growth, capacity strengthening, and measurable societal impact, guided by the Quad-Helix Partnerships model integrating academia, industry, government, and community. The University's engagement ecosystem was activated through close collaboration between academic units and enabling structures of the University.

Key institutional achievements during the quarter illustrate the depth and reach of this integrated approach. Notably, DUT achieved international recognition as the first African institution to host the Global Innovation and Start-Up University (GISU) Entrepreneurship and Innovation Competition, with student entrepreneurs receiving global awards. Concurrently, the expansion of incubation, pre-

incubation, and entrepreneurship programmes supported students, alumni, and community-based enterprises, contributing to enterprise development, job creation, and inclusive economic participation. These initiatives were complemented by feasibility-driven innovation development, intellectual property protection, and early-stage commercialization pathways coordinated through the Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) and Innobiz DUT Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (Innobiz DUT) ecosystem.

Teaching, learning, and curriculum innovation remained central to DUT's academic project. Through leadership and support from Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), faculties advanced Project-Based Learning, Design Thinking, Emerging Fields



DUT signing of the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 (MCU 2020) DUT represented by the DVC RIE Prof Fulufhelo Nemavhola





Participants at the ROBOGIRL 2025

of Study, and ethical integration of digital and artificial intelligence tools. These initiatives strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration, enhanced graduate readiness, and aligned curricula with societal and industry needs. Faculty-based research outputs across Health Sciences, Engineering and the Built Environment, Applied Sciences, Arts and Design, Textiles, and Maritime and Environmental Studies further reinforced the University's applied research profile and contribution to national and global development priorities.

DUT's internationalization agenda advanced significantly during the quarter, led by the International Education and Partnerships (IEP) Directorate. Strategic partnerships were expanded across Africa, BRICS countries, Europe, and selected global regions through memoranda of understanding, partnership activation tours, and participation in major international platforms. These engagements enabled joint research, staff and student mobility, postgraduate co-supervision, and the growth of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), strengthening Africa-centred and digitally enabled internationalization.

DUT became a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 (MCU 2020), joining a global network of more than 1000 universities from over 90 countries, that have affirmed their commitment to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, integrity and the public responsibility of higher education. The historic signing ceremony took place at King's College London, one of the world's leading universities and host of this year's international MCU gathering. The

event brought together higher education leaders from across the globe to reaffirm shared values that underpin the modern university.

Community engagement and social responsiveness remained a defining feature of DUT's work. Through coordinated efforts facilitated by faculties, research institutes, and support the University implemented community-linked learning, public health and environmental awareness initiatives, youth development programmes, and social innovation projects. These engagements supported schools, informal and small enterprises, and vulnerable communities, while providing students with meaningful experiential learning opportunities grounded in real-world contexts. Complementing this work, the Advancement and Alumni Relations Unit strengthened institutional networks through philanthropic fundraising, alumni engagement, mentorship, and student support initiatives, enhancing access, retention, and success.

Collectively, the activities of the fourth quarter of 2025 demonstrate DUT's continued evolution as a responsive, engaged, and future-focused University of Technology. Through coordinated multi-unit collaboration, strategic partnerships, and a strong commitment to sustainability and inclusivity, DUT advanced its strategic objectives while delivering tangible institutional and societal impact. These efforts reinforce the University's identity as a leading African University of Technology, well positioned to deepen its contribution to innovation, knowledge production, and societal transformation in alignment with ENVISION2030.

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2. KEY FOCUS AREAS AND INITIATIVES

2.1 RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT

2.1.1 Highlights of Research Programmes, Grants, and Publications

During the fourth quarter of 2025, Durban University of Technology (DUT) recorded significant progress in research engagement, innovation translation, and international collaboration, underpinned by strong institutional coordination and multidisciplinary participation.

Research output across the University remained strong, with numerous peer-reviewed publications produced through both internal and external collaborations. These outputs spanned a wide range of disciplines, including health sciences, environmental sciences, biotechnology, social sciences, education, engineering, and public health. Publications appeared in reputable national and international journals, with several articles published in high-impact and Q1-ranked journals - evidence of DUT's growing research footprint and contribution to addressing local, regional, and global challenges.

The Faculty of Management Sciences (FMS) demonstrated particularly strong research productivity during 2025, contributing both volume and thematic breadth to the University's research profile. Research supervision and honorary research activity in operations and quality management resulted in approximately 25 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers over

the quarter. These outputs advanced applied and interdisciplinary scholarship in areas including innovation and industry policy, artificial intelligence and machine learning applications, enterprise resource planning and supply chain systems, SME growth and sustainability, cybersecurity, smart technologies, and digital learning environments. Faculty research also made substantive contributions to social justice and development scholarship, addressing disability, youth economic empowerment, migration, assessment equity, work readiness in digital contexts, and barriers to quality education. In addition, sustainability-focused research examined circular economy challenges, nanotechnology applications in food preservation and packaging, occupational health and safety readiness in industry, and green supply chain transformation, aligning strongly with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The Faculty of Arts and Design (FAD) demonstrated strong research performance and societal engagement, exceeding its annual research publication targets with a total of 64.31 Research Output Units recorded to date and 119 accredited outputs on the DHET list, comprising 95 journal articles, two books, 21 book chapters, and one conference proceeding. This performance reflects strengthened research leadership, improved institutional stability, and sustained encouragement of scholarly productivity. Research capacity development remained a priority, with ten academic staff members currently registered for doctoral studies across DUT and other South African universities, alongside continued contributions



Staff from FAS recognised for their Academic and Research Excellence

from honorary researchers through extended researcher-in-residence appointments. Faculty staff actively participated in a wide range of funded local and international research activities, including conferences, workshops, exhibitions, and hybrid seminars, supported through both internal and external funding sources. In addition, the Faculty organised numerous research-related activities throughout the year, including postgraduate supervision training, academic writing and publication workshops, methodology seminars, guest lectures, and its annual research conference, contributing to a vibrant research culture and knowledge exchange environment. Engagement was further strengthened through hosting local and international academic and industry experts, extensive participation in professional and scholarly associations, representation in international sustainability-focused capacity-building programmes, and recognition of postgraduate and postdoctoral research excellence through prestigious international awards and continental-level acknowledgment of impactful scholarship addressing social cohesion and African knowledge systems.

The Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) demonstrated strong research governance, programme quality assurance, and postgraduate progression across multiple disciplines. The Faculty also responded to multiple professional accreditation audits conducted by the South African Maritime Safety Authority for undergraduate and postgraduate maritime qualifications, addressing all recommendations and submitting the required documentation for reaccreditation review. Financial management within the Faculty remained sound, with full utilization and reconciliation of allocated research and operational budgets within the 2025 financial period.

Research productivity and capacity development were evident across departments, with peer-reviewed publications produced in Statistics, Sports Studies, and Food and Nutrition, covering themes such as digital marketing, agricultural and environmental sciences, physical activity and health, corporate social responsibility in sport, food systems transformation, indigenous knowledge, and sustainable diets. The Department of Chemistry contributed to postgraduate research development through hosting a research workshop and awards event focused on the Sustainable Development Goals, alongside active participation in professional scientific forums. Curriculum innovation and applied research were further advanced in Textile Science and Apparel Technology through entrepreneurial learning interventions, strengthened industry partnerships, the submission of a new master's qualification, and the initiation of doctoral research projects focused on sustainable materials, advanced coatings, and natural dyes. Collectively, these activities highlight the Faculty's integrated approach to advancing research outputs, postgraduate training, industry alignment, and sustainability-focused scholarship in support of societal and economic development.

Research leadership and scholarly excellence were further reinforced through significant individual recognitions during the quarter. The Interim Director for Research and Postgraduate Support was appointed to the Early Career Board of ACS Sustainable Resource Management, an editorial advisory board of the American Chemical Society. This appointment strengthens DUT's visibility and leadership in global sustainability science, while providing an important platform for African and Global South



Dr Riona Indhur the winner of the 2025 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Award

perspectives to inform international discourse on sustainable resource management strategies.

Further cementing the University's reputation for impactful and engaged scholarship, a postdoctoral fellow based at the Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology (IWWT) received the prestigious 2025 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Award. The award recognised pioneering research in sustainable water technologies, specifically the development of advanced nanocomposites for microplastic removal. This work directly addresses critical environmental and public health challenges associated with water security in South Africa and exemplifies "Impactful Engagement" in alignment with the Society perspective of ENVISION2030.

The Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology (IWWT) recorded particularly strong research performance during the quarter. Four peer-reviewed journal articles were published, with an average impact factor of 5.4, half of which appeared in Q1-ranked journals. Researchers actively participated in international conferences and workshops, presenting work on wastewater treatment, bioaerosols, and microplastic remediation. The Institute hosted a guest lecture by Professor Mahmoud Nasr on modelling and economic considerations in wastewater treatment technologies, alongside a scientific publication writing workshop led by Professor Naser, aimed at strengthening postgraduate research and publication capacity.

Further strengthening its engagement mandate, the IWWT hosted participants from the Young Engineers Changemakers Programme, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and dialogue on

water-related challenges. These engagements underscored the Institute's role in developing future research leaders capable of driving sustainable and innovative solutions within the water and wastewater sector.

In terms of research funding, several new projects were approved during 2025 through agencies such as the Water Research Commission, the Tertiary Education Support Programme, and the National Research Foundation. These grants support research in wastewater treatment, industrial effluent remediation, marine and coastal microbiomes, and climate-responsive sanitation technologies.

The Institute continued to support a vibrant postgraduate and early-career research environment, with ten master's and fourteen doctoral students registered across multiple faculties. It also hosted interns from the Human Sciences Research Council and FoodBev SETA. Academic milestones achieved during the year included the graduation of two PhD and one MSc candidates at the Spring graduation ceremony. In addition, sixteen post-doctoral fellows were hosted across diverse disciplines, contributing to both established research strengths and emerging niche focus areas.

Several core TTI operational activities were advanced during the quarter. These included commercialization initiatives within the Department of Textile Sciences and Apparel Technology; feasibility assessments for incubated projects transitioning towards pre-commercialization at Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) 6–7; preparations for DUT's participation in the Science Forum Conference; institutional research awards review processes; and the issuance of calls for TTI funding. Collectively, these activities reinforced the University's innovation pipeline and strengthened pathways from research to market.

Following a successful incubation training and technology review workshop held in September, TTI consolidated a comprehensive progress report detailing the advancement of technologies under translation into innovation products. Projects were evaluated using established technology development metrics aligned to the TRL framework. Despite ongoing procurement-related constraints affecting timelines, notable progress was achieved. The wastewater processing technology advanced to TRL 7–8, resulting in the development of two full patents and the securing of letters of intent from prospective customers. The Chiropractic Backpack Project also demonstrated strong momentum, with the innovator undertaking a technology development and manufacturing visit to China to prototype the first production batch and to assess equipment and infrastructure requirements for establishing a local manufacturing facility.

The SmartQx Project, which has been under development since 2022, progressed through successive development phases and was assessed at TRL 8 during the reporting period. The project has

been valued at an estimated R5 million in capital and operational expenditure for full-scale commercialization, with a clear trajectory towards TRL 9. Associated intellectual property has reached an advanced stage of filing. In addition, the nutraceutical project recorded significant progress, particularly in the production of herbal-based homeopathic interventions. Other innovation projects advancing through the pipeline included the bio-brick, classroom application, sanitary pad, and toothpaste initiatives, highlighting the diversity and societal relevance of DUT's research portfolio.

In a notable student research achievement, first-year Nursing student represented DUT at the China Belt and Road Medical Innovation Competition, where she presented her project further showcasing the University's commitment to nurturing emerging researchers.

International research engagement was further strengthened through the work done by IEP. Research capacity-building and international curriculum development initiatives were expanded through participation in research visits and forums held in Istanbul and Rabat. The IEP also led the successful hosting of International Week in July 2025, which opened with a plenary session focused on inclusive, comprehensive, and holistic approaches to internationalization in higher education. The programme showcased best practices from international partners and highlighted DUT's strengths in multidisciplinary collaboration.

As a direct outcome of International Week, DUT formalized two memoranda of understanding with Alliance University and the African Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (ACHER). These partnerships have already yielded collaborative initiatives, including Collaborative Online International Learning engagements and the nomination of Professor Das as an honorary researcher within the Faculty of Management Sciences. Additional memoranda of understanding were concluded with five universities during the Global South Dialogue Conference (GSDC), with further partnerships emerging from engagements at both the GSDC and the Association of African Universities Conference. These agreements support academic and research cooperation, staff and student mobility, collaborative online learning, research seminars, and the internationalization of programme advisory boards.

Overall, the fourth quarter of 2025 demonstrated robust research engagement at DUT, characterized by strong institutional coordination, measurable progress in innovation translation, increased research outputs, and deepened international partnerships. The alignment of research, innovation, funding, and capacity development initiatives during this period reflects the University's continued commitment to advancing high-impact, socially responsive, and globally connected research that contributes meaningfully to national development priorities and global knowledge production.

“The SmartQx Project, which has been under development since 2022, progressed through successive development phases and was assessed at TRL 8 during the reporting period.”





Exhibition of the banana fibre sanitary pad project at the Science Forum South Africa 2025 Conference

2.2 RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

2.2.1 National Collaborations

During the fourth quarter of 2025, TTI strengthened and expanded DUT's national research and innovation partnerships, with a particular focus on applied research, commercialization, and community-responsive innovation.

TTI initiated strategic engagement discussions with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to explore collaborative opportunities across several innovation-driven projects. These include the banana fibre sanitary pad initiative, bioplastic fabrication from hemp biomass, and the eggshell-based toothpaste project. These engagements aim to leverage complementary technical expertise and infrastructure to accelerate product development and support sustainable, locally relevant manufacturing solutions.

In parallel, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) expressed its intention to partner with DUT on the Bio Brick initiative and the biofuels from plastic pyrolysis project. These potential collaborations align with national industrial development priorities and underscore DUT's role in supporting circular economy approaches, green technologies, and inclusive economic growth. Additionally, efforts to establish the FoodBev Chair Collaboration progressed, with a funding application submitted to

the FoodBev SETA to support agro-processing research focused on indigenous crops and the development of value-added food and beverage products.

Within Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), a Memorandum of Understanding between DUT and the College of Emergency Care was formally concluded. This partnership is intended to strengthen community engagement through joint activities between the two institutions. Core objectives include building capacity among emergency medical care academics and students in community engagement, enhancing curricula, and expanding engagement initiatives within the Western Cape. The collaboration also places strong emphasis on joint research projects and co-authored publications focused on community-based emergency care and engagement practices.

The Department of Homoeopathy continued to pursue innovative approaches to broadening students' research scope while remaining within the professional parameters of homoeopathic practice. This initiative is expected to stimulate new national collaborative opportunities, including engagement with izinduna, professional athletes, traditional healers, and members of the police service, driven by novel and contextually grounded student research topics. Similarly, the Chiropractic Department advanced towards finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding with KwaZulu-Natal Athletics, with plans for a formal press announcement to mark the partnership. This collaboration is expected to support applied



research, student experiential learning, and evidence-based sports performance and injury management initiatives.

National collaboration was further strengthened through faculty-led academic partnerships and sector-facing platforms. Within the FMS, the Department of Operations and Quality Management convened a National Quality Forum in October 2025, bringing together academic representatives from multiple South African universities, including UNISA, the University of Johannesburg, and Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The forum served as a collaborative platform to engage on curriculum relevance, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) competencies, decolonization, and assessment integrity in the context of artificial intelligence, reinforcing shared approaches to quality assurance and teaching excellence within the national higher education system.

DUT's commitment to fostering meaningful collaboration was further reflected through the hosting of International Week 2025 in July at the DUT Hotel School and the Curries Fountain Sports Development Complex. While international in scope, the programme played a significant role in strengthening national stakeholder engagement and reinforcing partnerships with public institutions, consular representatives, and local government. Anchored in the principle of stewardship as articulated in DUT's ENVISION2030 strategic framework, International Week created a platform for dialogue on inclusive internationalization, intercultural learning, and ethical collaboration within the national higher education landscape.

National stakeholders engaged during the programme included representatives from the Chinese and Indian Consulates-General, as well as the eThekweni Municipality unit responsible for internationalization and governance. These engagements highlighted opportunities for collaboration at the intersection of diplomacy, academia, and local development. Contributions from national and regional thought leaders further enriched the discourse, positioning DUT as a convenor of critical conversations on equity, diversity, and transformation in higher education.

IWWT continued to strengthen its national collaboration footprint through sustained partnerships with local universities, water utilities, municipalities, and industrial stakeholders. By bridging academia and practice, the Institute supports the advancement of wastewater treatment technologies and sustainable water management solutions. Ongoing collaboration with former postdoctoral fellows and research associates further enhances the Institute's research ecosystem, ensuring continuity, knowledge transfer, and innovation-driven impact.

Collectively, the national collaborations advanced during the fourth quarter of 2025 reflect DUT's strategic approach to building purposeful, impact-oriented partnerships across government, industry, professional bodies, and communities. These collaborations not only strengthen the University's applied research and innovation agenda but also reinforce its role as a responsive, engaged institution aligned with national development priorities. Through sustained partnership-building, DUT continues to translate research into practical solutions, enhance student and staff capacity, and contribute meaningfully to socio-economic development at a national level.

2.2.2 International Collaborations

DUT continues to strengthen its international research partnerships, with a strategic focus on innovation development, curriculum enhancement, postgraduate training, and globally relevant research addressing societal challenges.

TTI advanced international collaboration efforts through innovation development and incubation programme engagements with the University of Cambridge, facilitated via Analytics /The Testing Company and associated industry partners. These engagements aim to strengthen DUT's technology translation pipeline through exposure to global best practices in innovation, testing, and commercialization. In parallel, comparative technology discussions were initiated with the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering at Concordia University, focusing on struvite production as an alternative biofertilizer to support food security initiatives. Ongoing collaboration with Maseno University further supports applied research on the banana fibre sanitary pad project, reinforcing South-South knowledge exchange and innovation for social impact.

Within FHS, international partnerships were expanded through the formalization of memoranda of understanding with O. P. Jindal Global University and the College of Social Work at Nirmala Niketan. These collaborations focus on advancing conceptual and applied approaches to community engagement within the Global South, with an emphasis on comparative learning between South Africa and India. Key areas of collaboration include joint research, curriculum integration, and the development of contextually grounded community engagement frameworks within social work and related disciplines.

Academic departments across the University also advanced discipline-specific international collaborations. The Chiropractic Department initiated discussions with the University of Health Sciences in Lahore, Pakistan to explore opportunities for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and joint academic activities, building on an existing institutional agreement. The Emergency Medical Care and Rescue Department, together with the Biomedical and Clinical Technology Department, engaged in collaborative benchmarking and programme development discussions with Boitekanelo College in Gaborone, Botswana. These engagements have laid the foundation for future collaboration, including support for the establishment of a clinical technology programme and enhanced academic exchange.

As part of an international benchmarking exercise linked to curriculum review, the Biomedical and Clinical Technology Department engaged with the University of Zimbabwe to assess qualification frameworks and programme alignment, contributing to ongoing academic collaboration and curriculum strengthening.

DUT's academic excellence and international visibility were further enhanced through participation in a distinguished global academic programme hosted by Parul University in Gujarat, India. This engagement provided a platform for scholarly dialogue, research collaboration, and international networking, and has initiated discussions towards a formal institutional partnership. The collaboration aligns with BRICS principles, strengthening academic ties between South Africa and India and creating pathways for joint research and academic exchange.



International research collaboration also extended to innovative, interdisciplinary projects. A partnership with the Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre at Carleton University focuses on children's cognitive mapping. This initiative equips Child and Youth Care students with participatory research methodologies to support children and youth in care centres and schools, particularly those who experience challenges in verbal emotional expression. The project exemplifies DUT's commitment to socially responsive, internationally informed research.

The Department of Basic Medical Sciences continued to expand its global research footprint through multiple international collaborations spanning Brazil, India, New Zealand, and other regions. These partnerships support joint research initiatives, Collaborative Online International Learning, and postgraduate co-supervision, enhancing both research quality and student development. International co-supervision arrangements were further strengthened through collaboration with global experts affiliated with universities and health institutions in the United Kingdom, Qatar, Palestine, and Tanzania, reinforcing DUT's postgraduate training capacity and global research integration.

DUT also maintained strong participation in international research networks addressing public health, physical activity, and nutrition. These include collaborative engagements with the University of São Paulo, the University of Basel, Rhodes University, and the University of Ottawa, as well as partnerships linked to the World Health Organization. These collaborations support large-scale, multi-country research initiatives, including systematic reviews, school-based health interventions, and Global Burden of Disease research.

Through its participation in the Global Sustainable Development Conference, DUT formalized memoranda of understanding with Ibn Tofail University, Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil, Karadeniz Technical University, Gedik University, and Gebze Technical University. These agreements support student and staff mobility, joint research initiatives, collaborative online learning, and participation in international advisory boards. Leadership engagements and site visits to institutions such as Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey further strengthened partnership development aligned with Africa's Agenda 2063.

From a resource sustainability perspective, international student mobility agreements present significant potential returns. Based on the current DUT fee structure, projected tuition income from modest inbound exchange participation indicates a strong return on investment, reinforcing the financial sustainability of international collaboration alongside its academic and developmental benefits.

DUT also continued to strengthen Africa-focused and regional partnerships with institutions such as the University of Ghana and the Namibia University of Science and Technology. These collaborations support initiatives in maritime education, gender inclusivity, entrepreneurship, and capacity-building, advancing DUT's ENVISION2030 objective of being an engaged and impactful university.

Further reinforcing its continental engagement, DUT played an active role in the Association of African Universities Quadrennial General Conference held in Rabat, Morocco. Engagements at the conference strengthened academic networks, expanded

opportunities for collaborative research, enhanced staff and student mobility, and promoted inclusive and gender-responsive higher education across Africa. These interactions also supported South-South cooperation and cross-continental collaboration aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063.

Within the FMS, international research collaboration was advanced through strategic scholarly engagement, staff mobility, and participation in global knowledge platforms. Through the International Centre of Nonviolence (ICON), academic staff contributed to high-level international scholarship and policy-oriented dialogue. These engagements included participation in global scientific recognition platforms, contributions to internationally edited volumes on sustainability, ecocide, and Anthropocene studies, and strengthened institutional collaboration with European universities, particularly in Germany. ICON staff also played an active role in international conferences hosted under UNESCO-affiliated platforms, contributing research on intercultural competence, social justice, and decolonial Africa-to-Africa higher education collaboration, while facilitating networking and research linkages with African and global institutions.

International collaboration was further reinforced at departmental level through applied and industry-relevant research partnerships. The Department of Operations and Quality Management collaborated with international partners from Alliance University (India) on research into virtual patient simulation, surgical training, robotics, and healthcare metaverse applications, resulting in peer-reviewed publications. The Department of Hospitality and Tourism leveraged existing Memoranda of Understanding with universities in Cuba, Poland, and Europe to support staff mobility, guest lecturing, joint research, and student exchange. These collaborations were complemented by Erasmus+ KA171-funded student mobility, enabling fully funded international study opportunities, and by leadership roles within BRICS-aligned research networks, particularly in tourism studies. Collectively, these international engagements enhanced applied research outputs, strengthened global academic networks, and supported DUT's Africa-centred internationalization agenda under ENVISION2030.

IWWT continued to attract international recognition through its high-impact, solutions-oriented research addressing global water and wastewater challenges. Its work has fostered partnerships with leading international institutions and experts, enabling the advancement of innovative, sustainable, and environmentally responsible technologies. These collaborations have also supported the successful mobilization of competitive international funding to sustain and grow the Institute's research agenda.

In summary, DUT's international collaborations during the fourth quarter of 2025 reflect a deliberate and strategic approach to global engagement, grounded in partnership, reciprocity, and societal relevance. Through innovation-driven research, curriculum collaboration, postgraduate co-supervision, and mobility initiatives, the University continues to position itself as a globally connected institution with a strong Global South orientation. These international partnerships enhance research excellence, build academic capacity, and extend DUT's impact beyond national borders, reinforcing its role as an engaged, future-focused university aligned with ENVISION2030.



DUT-incubated innovations exhibited at the Science Forum South Africa (SFSA) 2025

2.2.3 Research Impact

Research impact during the fourth quarter of 2025 was strongly evident in the growing recognition, uptake, and application of innovations emerging from the TTI. Incubated technologies attracted sustained interest from government, industry, and research stakeholders, with several engagements progressing beyond initial consultation towards structured collaboration and partnership formation. Also, DUT has confirmed NRF ratings of the 6 professors and the 5 conditionally accepted applications. This reflects the maturity of DUT's innovation pipeline and its responsiveness to pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges.

The exhibition of selected DUT-incubated innovations at Science Forum South Africa 2025 provided a high-impact platform to showcase University-developed technologies to a diverse audience of policymakers, researchers, industry representatives, and the public. Engagements at the exhibition enabled stakeholders to interact directly with innovators, deepening understanding of the relevance, scalability, and application potential of DUT-led solutions. These interactions generated multiple expressions of interest, several of which have since progressed towards prospective partnerships and collaborative initiatives.

Notably, research impact was reinforced through strengthened collaboration with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research on the Banana Fibre Sanitary Pad project, and with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) on the Bio Brick initiative. These engagements demonstrate the translation of research outputs into nationally relevant innovation pathways aligned with industrial development, sustainability, and

inclusive growth objectives. In a strong indication of stakeholder commitment, senior officials responsible for project and financial oversight within the DTIC undertook a self-initiated site visit. This visit included laboratory tours and engagements across key points of the innovation value chain, including sugar milling facilities and municipal landfill sites, enabling informed assessment of scalability, feasibility, and implementation potential.

Beyond technology-focused outcomes, DUT's research impact has been amplified through international research engagement facilitated by the IEP. These collaborations have strengthened DUT's scholarly influence and global visibility while advancing the ENVISION2030 strategic objectives. Partnerships spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas have enabled joint research initiatives, international research seminars, postgraduate co-supervision, and staff and student mobility, contributing to a dynamic global knowledge exchange ecosystem.

Importantly, the integration of sustainability principles across these collaborations has reinforced the relevance of DUT's research agenda to both local and global development priorities. International partnerships have supported the internationalization of programme advisory boards, enriched curriculum development, and embedded applied research within broader socio-economic and environmental contexts. Collectively, these outcomes position DUT as a leading contributor to impact-driven research and innovation within the Global South, with growing recognition at continental and international levels.

In summary, research impact during the fourth quarter of 2025



The IEP and FAS Department of Food & Biotechnology representatives with the delegation from Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany

was demonstrated through tangible stakeholder engagement, advancing partnerships, and the visible translation of research into practical, scalable solutions. Through the strategic alignment of innovation incubation, national and international collaboration, and sustainability-oriented research, DUT continues to strengthen its role as an engaged university delivering measurable societal, economic, and environmental impact. These outcomes underscore the University's commitment to ensuring that research excellence is matched by relevance, accessibility, and meaningful contribution to development imperatives, in line with ENVISION2030.

2.2.4 ENVISION2030 Alignment

All research, innovation, and engagement activities undertaken during the fourth quarter of 2025 demonstrate strong and deliberate alignment with DUT's ENVISION2030 strategic framework, underpinned by the University's 12 strategic objectives, which collectively serve as the guiding blueprint for institutional transformation. The framework is operationalized through the University Strategy Map and interpreted across four interrelated strategic perspectives: stewardship, systems and processes, sustainability, and society. Together, these perspectives inform the conceptual DNA of the University and guide the implementation of research, innovation, and engagement initiatives.

Within this framework, support units like TTI, Innobiz DUT, and CSERI contribute directly to Strategic Objectives 3, 4, 7, and 11. As outlined in preceding sections, activities such as innovation incubation, commercialization, intellectual property protection, are embedded within the systems and processes perspective,

strengthening institutional capacity for innovation delivery. Third-stream income generation and commercialization initiatives, including projects progressing through advanced Technology Readiness Levels, directly support the sustainability perspective by enhancing financial resilience and promoting long-term impact.

Engagement-focused initiatives, including participation in national platforms such as Eskom Expo 2025 and the hosting of innovation-focused events such as the Innovation Indaba and departmental entrepreneurship and research days, reflect strong alignment with the society and stewardship perspectives. These platforms position DUT as a convener of knowledge exchange and a catalyst for socially responsive innovation, while fostering collaboration between the University community, government, industry, and civil society.

International research partnerships advanced through the IEP further demonstrate alignment with ENVISION2030 perspective on stewardship, and commitment to sustainability, partnership, and societal impact. As highlighted in earlier sections, DUT strengthened intra-African collaboration through sustained engagement with the Namibia University of Science and Technology and through leadership within Africa-centred partnership networks that promote collaborative research, mobility, and capacity development. These initiatives reinforce Africa-focused internationalization and the expansion of continental knowledge systems.

Strategic alignment was further evidenced through partnerships formalized during 2025 at major global platforms, including the Global Sustainable Development Congress. Memoranda of understanding concluded with Ibn Tofail University, Universidad

Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil, and several Turkish institutions such as Karadeniz Technical University, Gedik University, and Gebze Technical University; support staff and student mobility, Collaborative Online International Learning, joint research initiatives, and the internationalization of advisory boards. These partnerships advance DUT's role as a globally connected yet locally grounded institution aligned with Africa's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

African-centred collaboration was also deepened through engagements with institutions such as the University of Ghana, the University of Dar es Salaam, and the Women's University of Africa, supporting joint research, curriculum innovation, academic mobility, and gender-inclusive education. Collectively, these initiatives embed sustainability, equity, and partnership at the core of DUT's academic and research agenda.

Alignment with ENVISION2030 was further reinforced through initiatives implemented within the CELT. In support of Strategic Objective S02, which focuses on fostering a culture of accountability and shared responsibility, student- and academic-facing process logs were introduced as part of an ethical artificial intelligence integration initiative. These tools promote transparency, reflective practice, and shared ownership of ethical decision-making in AI-supported learning environments, reinforcing institutional values of integrity and accountability.

In support of Strategic Objective S05, which seeks to enable optimal performance through integrated digital systems and processes, an in-person Special Interest Group was established to explore emerging artificial intelligence tools and frameworks in higher education. The group has facilitated collaborative inquiry into AI competency frameworks, the academic application of Google Notebook LM, and the integration of Microsoft Copilot Agent into teaching workflows. This initiative promotes digital fluency,

peer learning, and informed adoption of AI-enhanced systems, strengthening DUT's capacity to respond effectively to a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Within the Faculty of Management Sciences, international research collaboration and scholarly engagement demonstrated strong alignment with ENVISION2030 through enhanced knowledge dissemination, capacity building, and global influence. Participation in high-profile international platforms, including global conferences, editorial boards, and jury panels, increased the visibility and impact of DUT research outputs, strengthened institutional reputation, and positioned the University as a contributor to global discourse on sustainability, climate action, peace, and ecological justice. These engagements facilitated strategic international partnerships, supported joint research and publication initiatives, and enabled the exchange of innovative methodologies that inform local teaching, research, and curriculum practices. Collectively, the Faculty's international collaborations advanced multiple ENVISION2030 priorities, including excellence in teaching and learning through practice-based models, people-centred and inclusive pedagogy, innovation and entrepreneurship, sustainability-focused research, and strengthened global partnerships - reinforcing DUT's standing as an Africa-centred, globally engaged university of technology.

In conclusion, the activities undertaken during the reporting period demonstrate a coherent and integrated approach to implementing ENVISION2030 across research, innovation, partnerships, and digital transformation. Through deliberate alignment with the strategic perspectives of stewardship, sustainability, systems and processes, and society, DUT continues to embed its transformative vision into operational practice. These efforts reinforce the University's position as an engaged, accountable, and future-oriented institution - one that advances socially responsive research, fosters meaningful partnerships, and contributes actively to sustainable development at local, continental, and global levels.



DUT Representatives and guests celebrating the DUT International Week 2025



2.3 RESEARCH EVENTS AND CONFERENCES HOSTED BY DUT

During the fourth quarter of 2025, Durban University of Technology (DUT) hosted and facilitated a wide range of research, innovation, and engagement events that strengthened research capacity, supported innovation development, and advanced the University's ENVISION2030 strategic objectives.

Academic staff across faculties actively contributed to institutional knowledge exchange through participation in the Annual Learning and Teaching Imbizo. Presentations focused on community-engaged scholarship, ethical pathways in higher education, and the integration of artificial intelligence and peer support strategies to promote equitable student success. These engagements strengthened reflective practice and reinforced the integration of research, teaching, innovation, and engagement across the academic project.

During the reporting period, the Faculty of Management Sciences contributed meaningfully to DUT's research events and scholarly engagement agenda through innovative, research-driven platforms. The Department of Marketing and Retail hosted a faculty-led webinar titled "The Next Frontier: Innovation Driving Retail Transformation" in October 2025, which explored emerging trends shaping the retail sector and strengthened engagement between academia and industry. Complementing this, the Department of Entrepreneurship Studies and Management implemented a Postgraduate Knowledge Exchange Series in October 2025 as part of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration. This assessment-integrated initiative repositioned postgraduate students as active researchers and facilitators, requiring them to design, host, and lead research-focused knowledge exchange sessions on contemporary entrepreneurship themes, including digital entrepreneurship, township enterprises, mental well-being, and informal economic models. The series fostered applied research, critical dialogue, and professional skill development while strengthening intradepartmental collaboration and mentorship. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate DUT's commitment to hosting inclusive, innovative research platforms that bridge theory and practice, cultivate research-active graduates, and advance scholarship with societal and economic relevance.

The Department of Textile Science and Apparel Technology hosted an international symposium on in November 2025 in collaboration with the University of Hamburg. Titled "Green Cycles", the symposium provided a platform for knowledge exchange on green, efficient, responsible, and innovative practices in textile and clothing manufacturing. The event foregrounded sustainability and circularity while remaining responsive to local student learning needs and industry contexts, reinforcing DUT's commitment to internationally connected, socially responsive research engagement.

DUT also hosted its inaugural International Week 2025 in July 2025 at the DUT Hotel School and the Curries Fountain Sports Development Complex. Anchored in the stewardship perspective of ENVISION2030, the programme convened academics, diplomats, students, government representatives, and international partners to advance inclusive internationalization and intercultural learning. Plenary sessions and thematic tracks explored holistic and ethical

approaches to internationalization, showcased global best practice, and highlighted DUT's multidisciplinary innovations. Dialogues addressed decolonial and sustainable internationalization within the Global South, while panel discussions engaged critically with complex issues such as academic xenophobia and equitable collaboration.

The programme culminated in a Diversity Day celebration, transforming Curries Fountain into a global village through cultural parades, music and dance performances, international cuisine tastings, and fashion showcases. This celebratory component reinforced DUT's commitment to inclusive access to global perspectives and intercultural engagement as a core element of its institutional identity.

International Week further featured high-level engagement with diplomatic representatives, local government, and national and continental higher education bodies. Public lectures, panel discussions, and workshops facilitated through the International Education and Partnerships (IEP) Office addressed themes such as African-centred internationalization, social justice, global partnerships, ubuntu-inspired leadership, youth participation in intercultural dialogue and climate action, and the role of arts and culture in fostering intercultural competence. Follow-up working group sessions ensured continuity and sustained engagement beyond the event.

Complementing these activities, the IEP hosted workshops on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and inclusive pedagogies, engaging academic and student support staff in discussions on integrating internationalization into teaching, research, and curriculum design. Additional public lectures and panel discussions explored the intersection of Africa's global positioning, artificial intelligence, ethics, customer engagement, and the role of sport in social cohesion and nation-building, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of DUT's engagement agenda.

International student engagement workshops held during the year further supported intercultural competence and inclusion. These sessions created safe and reflective spaces for local and international students to navigate cultural differences, share traditions, and develop mutual understanding, contributing to a more inclusive and globally aware student experience.

The inaugural Continental Student Leadership Summit (CSLS), was hosted in July 2025 convening student leaders and delegates from Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Held under the theme "Empowering Tomorrow: Leadership, Innovation and Unity Across Borders," the summit provided a research-informed platform for dialogue on ethical leadership in a volatile global context, Africa's geopolitical positioning, innovation and entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence-driven policy development, and climate resilience. The summit concluded with a set of collective resolutions, including the establishment of a permanent Pan-African Student Leadership Forum, reinforcing DUT's role in advancing youth leadership, cross-border collaboration, and knowledge exchange in support of a resilient and united African continent.

In support of Strategic Objective 10, DUT hosted the Learning, Teaching, Research, Innovation and Engagement (LTRIE)



DUTVC and Principal Prof Thandwa Mthembu with the UNISAVC and Principal Prof Puleng LenkaBula at the LTRIE Conference 2025

Conference 2025 in October 2025 under the theme “Converging Horizons: Transformative Education, Research and Innovation.” The conference served as a flagship institutional platform for scholarly exchange, innovation, entrepreneurship, and social impact. Through keynote addresses, panel discussions, workshops, paper and poster presentations, innovation exhibitions, and networking sessions, the conference fostered a vibrant community of practice committed to inclusive, critical, and transformative engagement with knowledge.

Conference themes aligned closely with DUT’s Philosophy of Education and ENVISION2030 priorities, encompassing ubuntu-based frameworks, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, epistemic decolonization, research for societal transformation, ethical adoption of artificial intelligence, design thinking, project-based learning, and innovation at the intersection of teaching, research, and engagement. Participation from universities across South Africa strengthened inter-institutional collaboration and knowledge exchange, reinforcing DUT’s role as a convener of transformative academic dialogue.

In collaboration with the TTI, the Innobiz DUT, and CSERI hosted the GISU Entrepreneurship and Innovation Competition 2025, marking a significant milestone as DUT became the first African institution to host this global event. The competition provided a high-profile platform for student innovation and entrepreneurship, with DUT studentpreneurs competing alongside peers from international institutions and achieving podium recognition. This achievement underscored DUT’s growing stature in global entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems.

Collectively, the research events and conferences hosted during the reporting period demonstrate DUT’s strong commitment to advancing research excellence, innovation capacity, and meaningful engagement at institutional, national, and international levels. Through strategically aligned platforms that integrate scholarship, entrepreneurship, inclusivity, and global collaboration, the University continues to cultivate a dynamic academic ecosystem that supports knowledge creation, societal impact, and sustainable development. These engagements reinforce DUT’s position as an engaged, forward-looking institution, embedding the principles of ENVISION2030 into lived academic and research practice.



DUT Student Winners at the Global Innovation and Start-Up University (GISU) 2025 Finals



2.4 INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

2.4.1 Collaborations with Industry Leaders and Organizations

DUT continues to strengthen industry collaboration across research, innovation, teaching, and student development, reinforcing its positioning as a responsive, practice-oriented institution aligned with national and global labour market needs.

Incubated projects supported through the TTI demonstrated strong alignment with relevant industry sectors, creating a solid foundation for sustained engagement with industry stakeholders. This alignment was facilitated through the strategic appointment of industry experts as technology development mentors. These mentors played a dual role: situating innovation projects within appropriate industrial contexts to ensure product relevance, and supporting market positioning within established industry value chains. This approach enabled effective product testing, validation, and early market penetration, strengthening the commercial viability and scalability of DUT-developed innovations.

Co-operative Education (CoOp) Unit successfully hosted the World of Work Careers Fair (WOW) 2025 in August 2025, providing a flagship platform for structured engagement between students and industry. The three-day event took place across DUT's Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses and attracted broad participation from industry partners across multiple economic sectors. A total of 194 organizations participated, engaging with 2,883 students through exhibitions, one-on-one interactions, and career development discussions. Despite the temporary suspension of on-campus academic activities during part of the event period, WOW 2025 proceeded successfully under strong student leadership, demonstrating institutional resilience and commitment to student development.

The objectives of WOW 2025 extended beyond recruitment and career awareness. The event enabled companies to position themselves as employers of choice, facilitated exposure to internships, graduate programmes, and workplace expectations, and created opportunities for plant visits and work-integrated learning placements. Importantly, the platform also supported the initiation and strengthening of formal partnerships through memoranda of understanding between DUT and participating employers.

The WOW Gala Dinner, hosted at the Greyville Convention Centre, further enhanced engagement through high-level networking between industry leaders, university leadership, and students. Several organizations expressed commitment to formalizing partnerships with DUT, including entities within accounting, engineering, media, defense, horticulture, and information technology sectors. These commitments signal growing industry confidence in DUT graduates and academic programmes, as well as the University's capacity to respond to sector-specific skills needs.

Within the FHS, industry and professional collaboration was strengthened through structured stakeholder engagement initiatives. A Stakeholder Supervision Workshop brought together organizations hosting and mentoring Child and Youth Care students during Work Integrated Learning placements, creating a platform for feedback, shared learning, and enhancement of supervision

practices. In addition, programme advisory board meetings held during the quarter enabled stakeholders to contribute directly to the shaping of clinical practice training and curriculum relevance, ensuring alignment with professional standards and sector expectations.

Industry collaboration was further advanced through infrastructure development initiatives. In November 2025, the Biomedical and Clinical Technology Department launched its first Skills Laboratory for Medical Laboratory Science, with participation from public and private sector training platforms as well as peer institutions. Industry partners committed to supporting the laboratory through the provision of equipment and reagents, reinforcing collaborative investment in skills development and applied training.

FMS strengthened industry collaboration through targeted partnerships that enhanced experiential learning, curriculum relevance, and graduate employability. The Department of Marketing and Retail established work-integrated learning (WIL) partnerships with the NMI-DSM Group, Mercedes-Benz Commercial Vehicles Umhlanga, Ford Pinetown, and Barons Durban (VW and Audi), successfully placing 24 students in industry settings where they gained practical exposure and workplace-ready skills. The Department of Operations and Quality Management deepened its industry engagement through a partnership with Assa Abloy Durban Electronics, which hosted three cohorts of final-year students between September and December 2025. Students led applied projects focused on lean process improvements, safety, and environmental initiatives, earning Six Sigma Yellow Belt certification upon completion. In support of curriculum alignment and industry relevance, the department also convened an Industry Advisory Board meeting in December 2025, engaging key stakeholders to inform curriculum revisions, problem-based learning, cooperative education, and collaboration with the Durban Chamber of Commerce. Complementing these engagements, second-year Operations Management students participated in structured factory visits hosted by Global Packaging (Pinetown), reinforcing theory-to-practice integration. Collectively, these initiatives reflect DUT's commitment to industry-responsive education and its positioning as a Site of Practice.

The IEP also contributed to strengthening industry-linked collaboration through its facilitation of DUT's participation in the Global Sustainable Development Congress. Engagements at the Congress enabled benchmarking and strategic dialogue with international industry, government, and academic partners, supporting alignment between DUT initiatives and global sustainability priorities. The IEP further strengthened collaboration with Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs), an award-winning social enterprise, supporting intercultural competence training and technology-enabled social impact initiatives. Preparatory engagements with diplomatic and local government stakeholders were also initiated, with high-level engagements planned for the first quarter of 2026.

CELT supported faculty-industry collaboration by embedding practical industry engagement within curriculum development, project-based learning, and design thinking initiatives. Notable examples included commercialization workshops within the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE), and partnerships

with South African Facilities Management Association (SAFMA) to support applied curriculum reviews. Faculty-specific collaborations further enhanced graduate employability, including applied projects with retail and manufacturing partners in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS), and experiential learning initiatives with uShaka Marine World within Sport Science programmes.

These diverse engagements ensured alignment with professional and industry standards, fostered innovation, and enhanced student career readiness. Students selected to represent DUT at national platforms further demonstrated the tangible outcomes of industry collaboration, showcasing applied learning, innovation, and professional competence.

In summary, industry collaboration during the reporting period was characterized by depth, diversity, and strategic alignment across research, innovation, teaching, and student development. Through structured engagement with industry leaders, professional bodies, social enterprises, and global partners, DUT continues to bridge the gap between academia and practice. These collaborations enhance graduate employability, strengthen applied research and innovation, and position DUT as a dynamic Site of Practice where learning, industry engagement, and societal impact converge in support of the University's ENVISION2030.

2.4.2 Industry-specific Projects and Research

Industry-specific research at DUT is shaped by an integrated ecosystem of academic expertise, industry engagement, and international collaboration. Through targeted research projects, postgraduate partnerships, and applied innovation platforms, the University continues to advance sector-responsive research that

bridges theory and practice, strengthens skills development, and supports sustainable socio-economic outcomes.

To strengthen industry-relevant research collaboration, DUT engaged international partners within the BRICS network and across the African continent to host a series of international research seminars. These platforms served a dual function: enabling collaborative engagement on industry-focused research projects, and building research capacity through postgraduate partnerships, co-supervision arrangements, and the formation of cross-border research teams. As reflected in earlier sections, these engagements supported research themes aligned with sustainability, technology development, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic transformation, while strengthening South–South collaboration and global research visibility.

In parallel, DUT explored new and emerging partnerships with institutions and innovation ecosystems in Ghana, Nigeria, Brazil, China, and India. These engagements focused on industry-specific projects that integrate technology innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development within both academic research and applied industry contexts. Through these partnerships, DUT continues to align research outputs with sectoral priorities, including manufacturing, the built environment, agro-processing, green technologies, and creative industries.

Industry-specific research and applied projects within the FMS demonstrated strong alignment with national sustainability priorities, sectoral needs, and DUT's positioning as a Site of Practice. Within the Department of Operations and Quality Management, collaborative research with industry leaders in the packaging sector produced high-impact outputs focused on circular economy



Delegates and Special Guests attending the BRICS Debate Championship Grand Finale 2025





Delegates attending the EBE Mini Conferences hosted in collaboration with the South African Facilities Management Association (SAFMA) and SAPPI

models, quality management systems, and sustainable production. Research presented at international platforms highlighted evidence-based approaches to post-consumer metal packaging recovery that exceeded national regulatory targets, underscoring the value of industry-academia collaboration in advancing environmental sustainability and green economic growth. Complementary studies examined quality management challenges in complex, multi-business packaging organizations, generating actionable recommendations on leadership, capability development, and continuous improvement to strengthen organizational resilience and competitiveness in volatile market conditions.

Industry-relevant engagement was further advanced through the Department of Hospitality and Tourism, where strategic collaborations supported workforce development, policy contribution, and applied research within the tourism and hospitality sector. Partnerships with national tourism bodies enabled new work-integrated learning and internship opportunities while embedding research and advisory input into sector transformation initiatives. Academic participation in provincial tourism master planning processes contributed directly to post-pandemic recovery strategies, while educator development programmes strengthened curriculum delivery in tourism, hospitality, and consumer studies at school level. Advisory board engagements and industry-facing activities reinforced the importance of digital competence, foreign language proficiency, professionalism, and adaptability, ensuring programme relevance to evolving industry demands. Collectively, these initiatives illustrate DUT's capacity to translate research into sector-specific impact, inform policy and practice, and prepare graduates equipped to contribute meaningfully to sustainable economic development.

At institutional level, DUT hosted and supported multiple scholarly and developmental platforms that enabled applied research and direct engagement between students, academics, and industry partners. Notable initiatives included final project-based learning and design thinking presentations within the Department of Textile Science and Apparel Technology, where student projects addressed real-world industry challenges and innovation opportunities. These initiatives strengthened industry responsiveness within curricula and enhanced student readiness for professional practice.

The Learning, Teaching, Research, Innovation and Engagement (LTRIE) Conference further provided a multidisciplinary platform for showcasing industry-aligned research and innovation, as discussed in earlier sections. Complementing this, faculty-based mini-conferences - such as the Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE) Mini Conferences hosted in collaboration with the South African Facilities Management Association (SAFMA) and SAPPI - enabled focused engagement on sector-specific challenges, applied research outputs, and professional practice trends. These platforms strengthened academic-industry networks and promoted the co-creation of knowledge aligned with professional standards and market needs.

By connecting research activity to practical application, DUT's industry-specific projects contribute to the emergence of multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary fields of study, bridging traditional academic boundaries. These initiatives reinforce the integration of research, teaching, innovation, and engagement, while supporting the development of solutions that respond directly to industry challenges and societal needs.

In conclusion, industry-specific projects and research during the reporting period reflect DUT's deliberate strategy to embed applied research within industry and professional contexts. Through international and regional collaboration, industry-aligned academic platforms, and curriculum-integrated research initiatives, the University continues to strengthen its Site of Practice model. These efforts enhance the relevance, impact, and sustainability of DUT's research agenda, ensuring that knowledge production is closely linked to innovation, skills development, and socio-economic transformation in line with ENVISION2030.

2.4.3 Knowledge Transfer and Technology Commercialization

Knowledge transfer and technology commercialization at DUT are anchored in the strategic translation of academic research into practical technologies, products, systems, and models that respond to industry and societal needs. Research outputs with commercial potential are systematically developed towards market readiness, supported by intellectual property (IP) protection mechanisms that enhance value, mitigate risk, and enable sustainable revenue generation.

Innovative research outputs are protected through a range of IP instruments, including patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, and product designs. These mechanisms not only safeguard institutional and inventor interests but also enable multiple commercialization pathways, including direct licensing, the sale of commercial units, and the establishment of spin-off or start-up enterprises. As reflected in earlier sections on innovation incubation and research impact, these pathways support the movement of research beyond the laboratory into competitive markets where

products and services can attract paying customers and deliver measurable socio-economic benefit.

IEP has played a complementary role by leveraging industry and community collaborations to create platforms for knowledge exchange, innovation, and socially responsive commercialization. Through partnerships with Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs) and initiatives linked to the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence, DUT has supported the development of tools and methodologies that strengthen intercultural competence, adaptive leadership, and community-led innovation. These initiatives demonstrate how knowledge transfer extends beyond conventional commercial models to include social innovation and public value creation.

Professional development programmes, including UNESCO Story Circles training delivered to Quadruple Helix partner groups, further contribute to this ecosystem by fostering global citizenship, ethical leadership, and collaborative problem-solving. Engagements with organizations such as the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation strengthen the interface between academic research and community-driven innovation, ensuring that knowledge generated within the University contributes directly to social cohesion, inclusion, and sustainable development.

DUT's approach to knowledge transfer is further reinforced through curriculum-integrated innovation supported by CELT. Faculty-industry collaboration is embedded within curriculum development, project-based learning, and design thinking initiatives, enabling students to engage with real-world challenges while contributing to applied research and innovation outcomes. Key initiatives included the Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE)



Department of Quality and Operations Students on Industry Visit





DUT Representatives with winners of the DUT Innovation Awards at the ESKOM EXPO International Science Fair 2025

Commercialization Workshop, which facilitated practical industry engagement and solution-oriented thinking, and applied curriculum reviews conducted in partnership with the South African Facilities Management Association (SAFMA).

Faculty-specific collaborations further strengthened pathways for knowledge transfer and graduate employability. These included applied projects between the FAS and Mr. Price, as well as industry-integrated learning experiences within Sport Science programmes through collaboration with uShaka Marine World. Through these engagements, students applied disciplinary knowledge in professional contexts, while industry partners benefited from research-informed insights and innovation.

Across faculties, these collaborations ensured alignment with professional and industry standards, fostered innovation, and enhanced student readiness for employment and entrepreneurship. Opportunities for students to represent DUT at national platforms further demonstrated the tangible outcomes of these partnerships, showcasing the University's capacity to translate knowledge into practice.

In summary, knowledge transfer and technology commercialization at DUT are driven by an integrated ecosystem that connects research, innovation, industry collaboration, curriculum design, and community engagement. Through structured IP management, diverse commercialization pathways, and socially responsive partnerships, the University continues to transform knowledge into action. These efforts reinforce DUT's positioning as a Site of Practice and a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship, and societal impact, firmly aligned with the strategic objectives and values and principles of the ENVISION2030.

2.5 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

2.5.1 Community Outreach and Development Programmes

Community and social engagement at DUT is embedded within an integrated model of research, innovation, teaching, and partnership, positioning the University as an active contributor to inclusive development and social transformation. Through structured outreach programmes, capacity-building initiatives, and community-responsive research, DUT continues to translate knowledge into tangible benefits for communities across KwaZulu-Natal province and beyond.

TTI actively supported community-based innovation development through participation in the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists. In collaboration with the Community Engagement Office, TTI sponsored a series of special awards at the 45th Annual Eskom Expo International Science Fair, held at the Emperor's Palace Convention Centre in November 2025. Six learner projects were recognized, with each awardee receiving access to a structured 12-month incubation opportunity within TTI. This initiative strengthened the pipeline between school-level innovation and higher education, supporting early talent identification and long-term innovation development. The engagement was governed by a formal terms-of-reference framework, ensuring transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

Applied community engagement was further advanced through a Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Design Thinking initiative led by the CSERI, in collaboration with the Department of Marketing and

Retail. The programme linked approximately 20 community-based small and medium enterprises with 200 second-year students, creating a mutually beneficial learning environment. Student teams worked collaboratively with enterprises to analyze market challenges, assess operating environments, and develop viable, context-sensitive solutions using design thinking methodologies. The initiative culminated in a public showcase event, where student projects were evaluated and recognized for innovation, practicality, and impact, reinforcing DUT's Site of Practice model.

Within the FHS, sustained community engagement initiatives supported capacity-building in rural and peri-urban contexts. A multi-year, externally funded programme focused on community development in Ndwedwe continued to deliver structured workshops aimed at strengthening grassroots community care. Training sessions addressed volunteer coordination, ethical practice, communication skills, problem-solving, and sustainability planning. The formal launch of a structured training programme marked a milestone in institutionalized community capacity development, with students providing ongoing mentorship through regular follow-up engagements to support continuity and long-term impact.

Health promotion and awareness initiatives were also delivered through faculty-led outreach. These included literacies and reading programmes in partnership with primary and early childhood education institutions, public health awareness webinars focused on cancer diagnostics, and oral health education campaigns conducted in collaboration with industry partners during national awareness months. Collectively, these initiatives contributed to preventative health education, early intervention, and improved community well-being.

Community outreach across the FMS reflected DUT's commitment to widening access to higher education, promoting social inclusion, and strengthening community–university linkages. The Department of Marketing and Retail, in collaboration with Entrepreneurship Studies and Management and Operations and Quality Management, led a series of community-facing engagements spanning faith-based institutions, media platforms, shelters, schools, and national science forums. These initiatives provided practical guidance on study pathways, employability, entrepreneurship, and personal development, while positioning DUT academics as accessible thought leaders. Public-facing engagements, including live radio broadcasts and community workshops, enabled the dissemination of knowledge beyond the classroom, supporting youth development, lifelong learning, and holistic student well-being in line with DUT's values of stewardship and societal impact.

Community development was further strengthened through experiential learning and policy-oriented engagement. Design Thinking initiatives hosted by the Department of Marketing and Retail connected students with small businesses and national innovation platforms, reinforcing employability, entrepreneurship, and applied problem-solving. The Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management contributed to national entrepreneurship discourse through participation in sector-wide platforms that emphasized the integration of incubation, teaching, and real-world application. Complementary outreach by Operations and Quality Management, Hospitality and Tourism, and Applied Law extended DUT's footprint into schools, industry forums, and policy dialogue

spaces, addressing environmental awareness, career guidance, tourism development, and labour policy reform. Collectively, these engagements illustrate a coordinated, faculty-wide approach to community outreach - one that embeds academic expertise within societal contexts, empowers diverse communities, and reinforces DUT's role as an engaged university advancing inclusive development.

IEP facilitated socially responsive engagement through collaborations with Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs) and the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence, supporting the development of tools and training programmes that strengthen intercultural competence, social innovation, and community leadership. Additional partnerships with civil society organizations enabled cross-border academic dialogue and community-led initiatives, while annual commemorative programmes such as Nelson Mandela Day mobilized staff, students, and international visitors in service of vulnerable communities.

IWWT advanced community-focused research impact through the launch of the "Tank to Tummy" Water Hygiene Education Campaign. Targeting rural and township communities reliant on municipal water tankers within the eThekweni region, the campaign promotes safe water handling, hygiene, and sanitation practices. The initiative is currently in its community entry and needs identification phase and represents a preventative public health intervention informed by applied research.

Skills development and digital inclusion formed a further pillar of community engagement. The Short Course Unit (SCU), in partnership with the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA), delivered mobile digital literacy training programmes aimed at unemployed youth across multiple communities. With support from provincial economic development stakeholders for recruitment and logistics, the programme trained 185 participants during the fourth quarter alone, contributing to a cumulative annual total of 929 beneficiaries. These initiatives support employability, digital participation, and inclusive economic development.

Through the Community Engagement Office, DUT also participated in the 45th Annual Eskom Expo International Science Fair, providing learners with access to resources, recognition, and innovation support through sponsored prizes and incubation funding. Literacy development initiatives were further strengthened through partnerships with the DUT Library and community-based organizations, including the hosting of a regional literacy competition designed to promote reading comprehension, critical thinking, and learner confidence among primary school learners.

The Community Engagement Office also recognized the contributions of student and staff volunteers through its annual Volunteer Appreciation Day, reinforcing a culture of service, recognition, and civic responsibility. In addition, curriculum-linked community exposure was facilitated through experiential learning initiatives such as the Warwick Market community tour, conducted in partnership with Asiye eTafuleni. This engagement enabled engineering students to explore real-world contexts and co-design sustainable solutions to improve working conditions for informal traders.





DUT staff and students from the Mechanical Engineering Department and CELT during the Markets of Warwick Visit facilitated by Asiye eTafuleni

Complementing these initiatives, CELT contributed to broader community capacity-building through knowledge-sharing engagements on digital transformation. Presentations delivered to national educator platforms focused on the ethical and effective use of artificial intelligence in basic and higher education, reinforcing DUT's role as a knowledge partner in advancing digital literacy and innovation beyond the university.

In summary, community outreach and development programmes during the reporting period reflect DUT's deep commitment to socially responsive engagement that integrates research, teaching, innovation, and partnership. Through sustained collaboration with schools, communities, civil society, government, and industry, the University continues to co-create knowledge, build capacity, and address real-world challenges. These initiatives not only enhance community well-being and inclusion but also enrich student learning and research impact, reinforcing DUT's identity as an engaged, developmental university aligned with the values and objectives of ENVISION2030.

2.5.2 Social Responsibility Projects

Social responsibility at DUT is expressed through structured, values-driven initiatives implemented at both faculty and institutional levels, integrating teaching, research, innovation, and community partnership to address social inequities and advance inclusive development in alignment with ENVISION2030.

At faculty level, social responsibility initiatives focused strongly on youth development, employability, health, and community well-being. The Faculty of Accounting and Informatics (FAI) participated in the MTN–EBL Digital Skills for Digital Jobs (DS4DJ) project, which supported the upskilling of 120 unemployed graduates

through future-focused digital skills programmes. This initiative directly addressed graduate unemployment and skills mismatches, while strengthening industry partnerships and contributing to workforce readiness in the digital economy. Within the Faculty of Health Sciences (FAS), long-standing community partnerships continued to deliver holistic, research-informed interventions for vulnerable populations. Collaboration with a harm reduction centre serving individuals experiencing homelessness and substance use challenges integrated service learning, applied research, and



FAI Executive Dean Professor Olugbara at the MTN, EBL DS4DJ

community participation to support health, psychosocial well-being, and social reintegration. Outputs from this work included peer-reviewed publications, participatory research projects, and newly funded evaluations of physical activity-based interventions, with wellness programmes co-designed to ensure cultural relevance, dignity, and sustainability. Student-led and curriculum-integrated initiatives across faculties further extended DUT's impact through therapeutic wellness programmes, academic support and life-skills initiatives for children in out-of-home care, cancer awareness campaigns, and sustained support for individuals living with chronic conditions, enabling students to address real-world challenges while developing professional competence and social consciousness.

At an institutional level, several flagship initiatives advanced social responsibility through innovation, entrepreneurship, and early pipeline development. A key initiative emerging from TTI involved the incubation of winners of the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists Special Awards. Conceptualized nationally and implemented from provincial to national scale, this programme provides structured incubation support, mentorship, and access to DUT's innovation ecosystem, while expanding stakeholder networks and strengthening partnerships with schools, government, and innovation agencies. Entrepreneurship as a vehicle for social impact was further advanced through CSERI, which engaged with faculty-based platforms to promote innovation awareness and incubation opportunities among students through interactive panel discussions focused on innovation pathways and sustainable enterprise development.

The Innobiz DUT Adopt-A-School Entrepreneurship and AgriTech Programme exemplified social responsibility with both local relevance and global reach. Through partnerships with national research institutes and universities, the programme was showcased at an international agro-science schools' competition, promoting scientific education, agricultural innovation, and youth leadership while positioning DUT as a contributor to global youth development and science diplomacy. Pre-university pipeline development remained a key focus area, with Innobiz DUT hosting its annual educational tour for primary school learners. These engagements provided early exposure to higher education pathways through interactive, student-led demonstrations across health sciences, engineering, and innovation spaces, including hands-on activities in robotics, Internet of Things applications, and basic programming.

Food security and basic needs support formed a critical component of DUT's social responsibility agenda. Faculty- and institution-wide initiatives included weekly meal provision for students experiencing food insecurity, student-led food distribution drives, and the launch of a daily meal support campaign coordinated through partnerships between academic units, student support services, and external social impact organizations. These interventions addressed immediate needs while reinforcing the University's commitment to care, dignity, and student success.

Education-focused social responsibility initiatives extended beyond campus through sustained school engagement programmes. The DUT School Engagement Project continued to support learners across multiple high schools through academic tutoring, career guidance, and extracurricular activities that promote holistic development, confidence, and aspiration, strengthening pathways

into higher education for learners from diverse backgrounds. In parallel, initiatives linked to the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence advanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion through collaboration with civil society partners and cross-border academic engagement, reinforcing DUT's role in promoting inclusive leadership and global citizenship.

Across all these initiatives, CELT continued to embed social responsibility within academic and research practice through curriculum innovation, applied research, and community-based projects. CELT-supported initiatives enabled students and staff to address societal challenges while cultivating ethical, reflective, and socially accountable approaches to knowledge production and professional practice.

In summary, DUT's social responsibility projects during the reporting period reflect a holistic and integrated approach to community impact, rooted in education, innovation, and partnership. By addressing social challenges across the life course; from school learners and unemployed graduates to vulnerable communities and students in need; the University continues to operationalize its commitment to stewardship, equity, and social transformation. These initiatives reinforce DUT's identity as an engaged developmental university, where academic excellence is inseparable from social responsibility and firmly aligned with ENVISION2030.

2.5.3 Partnerships with Local Communities and Organizations

Partnerships with local communities and organizations form a cornerstone of DUT's engagement mandate, enabling the co-creation of knowledge, the translation of research into practice, and the advancement of inclusive, sustainable development. Through place-based collaboration, DUT continues to strengthen relationships that integrate community priorities with academic expertise, innovation, and skills development.

TTI launched a strategic initiative to partner with agricultural communities involved in sugarcane, hemp and cannabis, and timber farming. These partnerships connect farmers with key industry and research stakeholders, including the Agricultural Research Council, Cedara, SAPPI, and Illovo Sugar. The collaboration focuses on waste valorization and innovative product development, creating opportunities for sustainable agricultural practices, circular economy solutions, and industry-relevant research that directly benefits rural livelihoods.

Within the FHS, partnerships supporting student well-being and mental health were strengthened through the co-hosting of an Institutional Suicide Prevention Awareness event. Delivered in collaboration with Higher Health, student leadership structures, and institutional support services, the event engaged approximately 300 students across faculties. The initiative provided critical information, promoted help-seeking behavior, and created space for dialogue, reinforcing DUT's commitment to holistic student support and social responsibility.

Community-based health and wellness partnerships were further advanced through an Inclusive Wellness initiative led by the Somatology Department in collaboration with a local primary healthcare clinic. This project focuses on the co-creation of wellness



strategies with transwomen, promoting health equity, dignity, and social justice. By embedding experiential learning within a socially responsive context, the initiative supports the development of culturally competent and adaptive graduates while contributing to community-defined wellness outcomes.

The FHS continued to strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations through both awareness and service-oriented initiatives. The Department of Radiography registered to participate in the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) Relay for Life, positioning staff and students to contribute to cancer awareness and fundraising efforts. Similarly, the Department of Emergency Medical Care and Rescue (EMCR) progressed towards formalizing a memorandum of understanding with the South African Red Cross Airwing, opening pathways for collaborative community outreach, rural health support, and experiential learning. Initial student participation in rural flying doctor services highlighted the potential for expanded faculty involvement in underserved areas.

Volunteerism and service learning remained integral to community partnership building. Chiropractic staff and students contributed to food security and dignity initiatives through volunteering at the Denis Hurley Centre, supporting daily operations such as meal preparation and service. This partnership was further strengthened through Nelson Mandela Day activities coordinated by IEP in collaboration with the eThekweni Municipality and the Denis Hurley Centre. The initiative brought together staff, students, international participants, and community partners in service of vulnerable populations, reinforcing shared values of compassion, solidarity, and active citizenship.

Within the Department of Operations and Quality Management, a preventative maintenance and awareness initiative based on the 5S Principles was implemented in collaboration with Student Housing Services, Residence Advisors, and student communities across twenty-eight student residences in Durban. Operations Management students applied supply chain and quality management principles through structured awareness campaigns, on-site engagement, and monitoring activities. The initiative resulted in measurable improvements in cleanliness, upkeep, and shared responsibility within residences, contributing to more sustainable and conducive living and learning environments while reinforcing the value of applied learning linked to societal needs.

The Department of Hospitality and Tourism further advanced community partnerships through culturally grounded, development-oriented initiatives. Collaboration with the Rural Tourism Development (RTD) project brought together civil society, traditional leadership structures, and government stakeholders to explore inclusive tourism models focused on heritage preservation, rural economic development, and sustainable investment. Cultural engagement was strengthened through the hosting of the African Food Festival, which celebrated African culinary heritage and decolonized curriculum practice while fostering strong participation

from students, staff, partners, and the wider community. Additional engagements, including women's leadership empowerment platforms and student-led hospitality events, combined academic assessment, industry exposure, and community interaction. Collectively, these partnerships illustrate DUT's role as a trusted local partner that integrates teaching, learning, and research with community priorities, advancing inclusive development and sustainability.

Applied research and technical collaboration with municipal partners were advanced through a new partnership between IWWT and eThekweni Water and Sanitation (EWS). This collaboration focuses on enhancing wastewater treatment operations through process optimization, troubleshooting, and the piloting of advanced technologies, including Anammox systems, algal-based tertiary treatment, and advanced oxidation processes. The partnership also includes plans for establishing a process laboratory with advanced monitoring, microbiological and chemical testing, wastewater-based epidemiology, and independent auditing capacity. In addition to operational improvement, the collaboration prioritizes staff training, postgraduate research opportunities, and student exchanges, strengthening both service delivery and research impact. A concept note is currently under development to formalize this initiative.

CELT supported community and school-based partnerships through the development of engagement communication linked to the DUT SATAP Tests project, in collaboration with provincial education district partners. This initiative strengthens feedback, transparency, and sustained collaboration with schools participating in assessment and learner development programmes.

Through a University Capacity Development Grant-approved Epistemic Decolonization Project, CELT also partnered with the Afrikan Centre for Intangible Phenomena Studies (ACIPS) to deliver a dialogue series on African spirituality and traditional practices in higher education. The initiative creates safe, inclusive spaces for critical engagement with knowledge systems that are often marginalized within formal curricula. By examining the role of African spiritual and traditional practices in student experiences and curriculum design, the project advances DUT's Philosophy of Education and contributes to decolonization, transformation, and innovation within the academic environment.

In summary, partnerships with local communities and organizations during the reporting period reflect DUT's commitment to collaborative, place-based engagement that bridges academic expertise with community knowledge and priorities. Through initiatives spanning agriculture, health, wellness, education, municipal services, and epistemic transformation, the University continues to co-create solutions that are socially responsive, sustainable, and impactful. These partnerships reinforce DUT's role as an engaged developmental university, strengthening trust, relevance, and shared value creation in alignment with ENVISION2030.

“ The FHS continued to strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations through both awareness and service-oriented initiatives. ”



2.6 INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

2.6.1 Collaborative Agreements with International Universities and Institutions

Collaborative agreements with international universities and institutions continue to strengthen DUT's global engagement ecosystem, supporting research collaboration, curriculum innovation, student development, and Africa-centred internationalization. These partnerships reflect a deliberate shift towards structured, impact-oriented collaboration aligned with ENVISION2030 and the strategic objectives of the International Education and Partnerships (IEP) portfolio.

Academic collaboration within the health sciences has been advanced through engagement between the Somatology and Nursing departments, the Confucius Institute, and students from Fujian University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. This collaboration supports participation in the China Belt and Road International Undergraduate Medical Innovation Competition, where students are jointly developing a research project. The initiative fosters cross-cultural academic collaboration, innovation, and exposure to global health perspectives within an undergraduate research context.

Research collaboration with institutions in Latin America was strengthened through academic engagement with the Universidade

Federal de Viçosa - Campus Florestal. Academic exchanges included specialist lectures on global public health challenges and research ethics, alongside exploratory discussions on joint research in plant-based antimicrobials and tuberculosis. These engagements support South-South collaboration and the development of comparative research initiatives between Brazil and South Africa.

Through IEP, DUT expanded its international partnership footprint across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, reinforcing a "glocal" approach that integrates global engagement with local relevance. During the reporting period, DUT formalized additional memoranda of understanding with Tamale Technical University, Ganpat University, Chennai Institute of Technology, Alliance University, and the University of Chemistry and Technology Prague. In addition, exploratory engagements with 42 institutions across multiple regions further expanded DUT's global network, laying the groundwork for future collaboration.

The DUT Business School advanced Africa-centred climate action partnerships through exploratory engagements with the University for Development Studies (Ghana), focusing on applied climate-change research, community-based data utilization, and sustainable development interventions. Global academic positioning was further reinforced through participation in the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Indore International Partners' Day, where opportunities for executive education, curriculum innovation, and joint programme development were identified with leading international business schools. In parallel, the Department of Hospitality and Tourism activated existing Memoranda of



DUT Students participating in an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Training Programme at JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland)



Understanding with the University of Havana (Cuba) and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Poland) through staff exchanges, guest lecturing, and visiting professorships, while also advancing BRICS-aligned research leadership and new MoU finalization processes with institutions in India and Portugal. Complementing these engagements, the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management facilitated targeted capacity-building through participation in an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Training Programme at JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland), exposing DUT Innovation and Entrepreneurship Champions to applied research, commercialization models, and industry-embedded pedagogy. Collectively, these international agreements and engagements strengthened DUT's global research networks, enhanced curriculum relevance, expanded mobility and co-creation opportunities, and reinforced the University's strategic positioning as an entrepreneurial, Africa-centred university.

DUT's international partnership development was significantly strengthened through active participation in the Association of African Universities 16th Quadrennial General Conference, held in Rabat, Morocco. Structured bilateral engagements with universities and higher education organizations from Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America focused on academic cooperation, research collaboration, staff and student mobility, and Collaborative Online International Learning. These engagements demonstrated strong interest in formalizing partnerships, particularly in postgraduate mobility, joint research, and digital collaboration, with follow-up actions planned to convert discussions into long-term agreements.

Further consolidation of European partnerships occurred through a Czechia partnership activation tour involving leading universities, including the Czech Technical University, Charles University, Brno University of Technology, and the Technical University of Liberec. Executive-level engagements and MoU signings focused on joint research, mobility, and curriculum collaboration across disciplines such as biotechnology, environmental sciences, electronic engineering, artificial intelligence, smart grids, textiles, renewable energy, and innovation-driven entrepreneurship. These partnerships were structured to ensure measurable academic impact through staff mobility, co-supervision, and collaborative research teams.

International engagement was further extended through targeted academic visits and delegation programmes. Engagements with universities in Ghana and Nigeria supported faculty-level collaboration in health sciences and applied sciences. In parallel, a strategic delegation visits to Finland strengthened collaboration with institutions including JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Aalto University, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, and the University of Helsinki. Discussions explored joint research, entrepreneurship education, circular economy initiatives, incubation models, and industry-linked research, contributing directly to DUT's innovation and commercialization agenda.

At a sector-specific level, IWWT facilitated a Reciprocal Non-Disclosure Agreement with King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, enabling structured discussions towards scientific and technical cooperation in water and wastewater research.



DUT Representatives during the Tampere University of Applied Sciences Visit



Delegates at the World Chinese Language Conference held in China

International academic collaboration was also supported through postgraduate and staff mobility initiatives facilitated by IEP. Participation in a postgraduate exchange programme with Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University in Germany promoted advanced research collaboration, exposure to international research methodologies, and the strengthening of institutional partnerships. These exchanges contribute to doctoral training, collaborative publication outputs, and the development of globally connected academic professionals.

International collaboration was further strengthened through the activities of the Confucius Institute. Through participation in the World Chinese Language Conference held in China from in November 2025, the Institute became a founding member of the newly established Global Alliance of Agricultural-Featured Confucius Institutes. This membership positions DUT within a new international collaborative platform supported by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation, creating expanded opportunities for structured cooperation in language education, agriculture-linked academic initiatives, research exchange, and institutional partnership development.

In November 2025, DUT was honored to become a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 (MCU 2020), joining a global network of more than 1000 universities from over 90 countries, that have affirmed their commitment to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, integrity and the public responsibility of higher education. The historic signing ceremony took place at King's College London, one of the world's leading universities and host of this year's international MCU gathering. The event brought together higher education leaders from across the globe to reaffirm shared values that underpin the modern university.

In conclusion, DUT's collaborative agreements with international universities and institutions reflect a mature and strategic approach to global engagement that prioritizes reciprocity, academic depth, and sustainable impact. Through formal agreements, exploratory partnerships, and structured mobility programmes, the University continues to strengthen its global research networks, enhance curriculum relevance, and expand opportunities for staff and students. These collaborations reinforce DUT's positioning as a globally connected, Africa-centred institution, advancing knowledge exchange, innovation, and societal impact in alignment with ENVISION2030.

2.6.2 Student and Faculty Exchange Programmes

Student and faculty exchange programmes remain a key mechanism through which DUT operationalizes internationalization, builds academic capacity, and develops globally competent graduates and staff. Facilitated through the IEP portfolio and supported by strategic international funding instruments, these programmes embed global exposure into teaching, learning, and research practice.

In 2025, the IEP facilitated student mobility through the Erasmus+ KA171 scholarship programme. Sixteen students participated in or were nominated for international study and exchange opportunities at partner institutions across Europe. Placement destinations included the University of Valladolid, Flensburg University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule München University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and DHBW Ravensburg. These exchanges provided students with opportunities to engage in diverse academic environments, expand disciplinary perspectives, and develop intercultural competence.



In addition to Erasmus-funded mobility, the Abe Bailey Trust Travel Bursary for 2025 was awarded to a DUT student from the Faculty of Health Sciences, supporting international academic exposure and leadership development. This award complements structured exchange programmes by recognizing academic merit and leadership potential while promoting global engagement.

Staff mobility was similarly advanced through the Erasmus+ KA107 programme, with fourteen staff members participating in teaching, training, and academic exchange visits. Host institutions included Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule München University of Applied Sciences, University of Huelva, University of Valladolid, University of Aksaray, and Rey Juan Carlos University. These exchanges enabled staff to benchmark institutional practices, engage with innovative pedagogies, strengthen research collaboration, and expand international academic networks.

CELT played a complementary role in maximizing the developmental impact of mobility by promoting reflective practice and cross-cultural learning among participating students and staff. Through structured engagement, returnee dissemination, and curriculum integration, CELT-supported initiatives ensured that insights gained through international exposure were translated into enhanced teaching practice, curriculum innovation, and student learning experiences.

Collectively, these exchange programmes contribute to the development of adaptive graduates and globally engaged academics. Students benefit through increased self-confidence, academic maturity, and global awareness, while staff gain exposure to alternative educational models, digital and pedagogical innovation, and international research practices. Importantly, the integration of global learning into local contexts strengthens DUT's capacity to deliver internationally informed yet locally relevant education.

In summary, student and faculty exchange programmes during the reporting period strengthened DUT's internationalization agenda by embedding mobility, intercultural learning, and global collaboration into the core academic project. Through strategic partnerships and structured mobility programmes, the University continues to build academic capacity, enhance graduate employability, and foster globally connected scholarship. These initiatives reinforce DUT's commitment to producing socially responsive, internationally aware graduates and academics, aligned with the transformative commitment of the ENVISION2030.

2.6.3 Global Research Initiatives and International Conferences

Global research initiatives and participation in international conferences form an integral element of DUT internationalization and research impact agenda. Through targeted engagement on high-level global platforms, the University continues to strengthen research visibility, advance sustainability priorities, and contribute to thought leadership within international higher education and research ecosystems.

DUT leveraged prominent international platforms to advance its sustainability-focused research agenda through participation in the Times Higher Education Global Sustainable Development Congress, held in Istanbul, Turkey. This forum provided a strategic

opportunity to showcase institutional initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, engage with global best practice in sustainability education and research, and strengthen partnerships with universities, industry stakeholders, and policy actors committed to sustainable development.

Continental research engagement was further reinforced through DUT's participation in the Association of African Universities 16th Quadrennial General Conference in Rabat, Morocco in July 2025. This platform enabled benchmarking with leading African universities, facilitated dialogue on innovation and sustainable development in higher education, and strengthened networks that support Africa-centred research collaboration and academic leadership. The engagement reaffirmed DUT's commitment to continental knowledge production and collaborative capacity-building.

During the fourth quarter, DUT also contributed to global discourse on digital internationalization through participation in the annual International Virtual Exchange Consortium (IVEC) Conference. In a leadership capacity within the Consortium, DUT played a prominent role in shaping discussions on the future of virtual international education. Contributions included convening plenary dialogue on emerging voices in virtual exchange, facilitating roundtable discussions focused on equity and inclusion, and providing synthesis reflections on inclusive, technology-enabled global learning. This engagement positioned DUT as a thought leader in the advancement of accessible and equitable internationalization models.

DUT further strengthened its global research and engagement profile through active participation in the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence Conference, held in Morocco in October 2025. Institutional contributions focused on decolonial and context-responsive intercultural practices in African higher education, collaborative digital pedagogies, and capacity-building through UNESCO Story Circles training. Additional scholarly contributions explored justice-oriented intercultural competence in contexts of conflict and the application of ubuntu-informed leadership frameworks within intra-African research teams. A dedicated workshop on Africa-centred internationalization, led through a continental university consortium, reinforced DUT's commitment to contextual, values-driven global engagement.

Within the Department of Hospitality and Tourism, academic staff presented research at leading international platforms, including the 4th BRICS Research Institute International Conference in India and thematic BRICS webinars and forums spanning Russia, Egypt, and intra-Africa networks. These engagements positioned DUT as a contributor to global discourse on sustainable gastronomy tourism, consumer protection through digital innovation, rural tourism development, and creative tourism within BRICS and Global South contexts. Additional participation in international hospitality and tourism conferences in Asia further enabled knowledge exchange, professional development, and the establishment of new research networks, strengthening the department's capacity for collaborative, internationally co-authored research.

The Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management strengthened DUT's presence in advanced technology and innovation research through representation at the 5th International



Participants at the International Workshop on Edible Fungus Technology and Juncao Industry Development under the Belt and Road Initiative in China

Conference on Robotics, Automation and Artificial Intelligence (RAAI 2025) in Singapore. Participation at this level, including service on an international technical review committee, reinforced DUT's contribution to global scholarly standards in emerging technology domains and ensured representation in IEEE-indexed, Scopus-listed research outputs.

Complementing these initiatives, CELT supported participation in international research collaborations and conferences through structured internationalization workshops. These platforms facilitated joint research development, dissemination of applied and theoretical scholarship, and sustained engagement with global academic peers. Importantly, CELT-supported initiatives ensured that insights from international research engagement were integrated into curriculum innovation, pedagogical practice, and institutional learning.

Collectively, DUT's participation in global research initiatives and international conferences strengthened institutional networks, enhanced research visibility, and embedded international perspectives within teaching and learning. These engagements supported the co-creation of knowledge, promoted inclusive and sustainable research practices, and reinforced the University's role within global and continental research communities.

In summary, DUT's engagement in global research initiatives and international conferences reflects a strategic and values-driven approach to internationalization that prioritizes sustainability, equity, and Africa-centred collaboration. Through active participation and leadership on international platforms, the University continues to enhance research impact, strengthen global partnerships, and contribute meaningfully to shaping the future of higher education and research. These efforts reinforce DUT's position as a globally connected, socially responsive institution aligned with the strategic objectives of ENVISION2030.

2.7 INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.7.1 Innovation Hubs and Startup Incubators

Innovation hubs and startup incubators at DUT provide an integrated ecosystem that supports the translation of research and ideas into viable products, enterprises, and social innovations. Through structured incubation, mentorship, and capacity-building, these platforms strengthen entrepreneurial capability, advance technology readiness, and contribute to sustainable socio-economic development.

TTI Incubation Programme is designed to facilitate innovation and technology development emerging from academic research. The programme supports innovators in developing and refining components of their technologies and advancing them toward fully functional products aligned with higher levels of the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale. Structured monitoring and evaluation processes ensure accountability, track development progress, and support the effective utilization of allocated funding instruments. In 2025, the incubation cohort comprised 14 active innovators, with an additional four innovators joining at different stages of development. Participants engaged in a range of technical, commercial, and entrepreneurial activities that strengthened innovation readiness and market positioning.

CSERI continued to strengthen the entrepreneurial pipeline through its pre-incubation and incubation programmes. Approximately 60 small and medium enterprises were recruited for the 2025/2026 cohort, with 30 enterprises selected for incubation and 30 for pre-incubation. In October 2025, CSERI hosted a Marketing Masterclass aimed at addressing challenges related to product positioning, branding, and market visibility. The session covered core marketing principles, brand development, and application of the marketing



mix, while introducing practical strategies and AI-enabled tools to enhance digital presence, profitability, and sustainable business growth.

In November 2025, CSERI hosted a Financial Management Workshop at the DUT Hotel School for the entrepreneur cohort. Delivered in collaboration with the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics (FAI), the workshop focused on strengthening financial literacy and sound financial management practices among emerging enterprises. Topics included taxation, record-keeping, risk management, and compliance, with academic oversight ensuring alignment between theoretical principles and practical application. The workshop contributed to building financially resilient enterprises capable of long-term sustainability. Also, in November 2025, CSERI hosted a graduation ceremony for pre-incubation entrepreneurs, marking the successful completion of a six-month development cycle. Participants demonstrated significant growth in confidence, clarity, and professionalism during final business pitch presentations. The event served as both a recognition platform and a peer-learning opportunity, reinforcing entrepreneurial identity and readiness for progression into incubation or independent enterprise development.

Within the FHS, innovation and entrepreneurship were further embedded at student level. A third-year nursing student who participated in a Hackathon Business Bootcamp in 2024 progressed into incubation with support from the Innobiz Desk. Through this platform, the student launched an ongoing initiative focused on entrepreneurship and financial literacy for students, demonstrating how innovation hubs enable student-led enterprise development. The initiative received external recognition and institutional awards, reflecting alignment with DUT values and entrepreneurial impact.

IEP continued to champion innovation and entrepreneurship throughout 2025 by aligning global engagement with ENVISION2030 priorities. Participation in international competitions and strategic partnerships strengthened DUT's innovation ecosystem, supported Africa-centred internationalization, and embedded global perspectives into entrepreneurial learning and practice.

DUT also deepened engagement with global and community-focused innovation ecosystems through collaboration with Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs) and initiatives linked to the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence. These collaborations created platforms for technology-driven social innovation, intercultural competence development, and community-led entrepreneurship, providing students and staff with access to international networks, mentorship opportunities, and innovation tools that extend beyond conventional commercial models.

CELT further supported innovation and entrepreneurship through curriculum-integrated approaches. Design thinking, problem-based learning, and commercialization principles were embedded across academic programmes, supported by platforms such as the PBL and Design Thinking Exhibition and the Engineering and Built Environment Commercialization Workshop. These hubs enabled students and staff to co-create solutions with both societal and industry relevance, fostering experimentation, collaboration, and applied problem-solving.

In summary, DUT's innovation hubs and startup incubators provide a coherent and enabling environment for entrepreneurial development, technology advancement, and social innovation. Through integrated incubation programmes, curriculum-embedded innovation, and strategic local and international partnerships, the University continues to strengthen its innovation pipeline



CSERI Participants at the Financial Management Workshop for the 2025 entrepreneur cohort

and entrepreneurial culture. These initiatives position DUT as a dynamic Site of Practice where research, learning, and enterprise converge, contributing meaningfully to sustainable development and advancing ENVISION2030.

2.7.2 Entrepreneurship Programmes and Competitions

Entrepreneurship programmes and competitions at DUT play a critical role in advancing innovations from concept development to enterprise readiness, while cultivating entrepreneurial capability among students and emerging innovators. These initiatives complement formal incubation by providing experiential learning, competitive exposure, and access to seed funding and mentorship.

Innovations currently supported under TTI Incubation Programme continue to progress towards entrepreneurial maturity at Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) 8–9. Six projects have been identified as having strong potential to reach this stage, subject to sustained technical, financial, and market support. These initiatives have been earmarked for pre-commercialization, with feasibility studies conducted to develop robust business cases and financial models that support enterprise development. As highlighted in earlier sections, projects such as the Chiropractic Backpack and SmartQx have reached advanced stages of development and are progressing towards full-scale commercialization.

Within the FHS, entrepreneurship support mechanisms facilitated through the Innobiz DUT have yielded tangible outcomes. Academic engagement with Innobiz enabled successful access to external bursary funding for self-funded nursing students, strengthening student retention and financial sustainability while reinforcing institutional partnerships. Building on this momentum, a third-year student progressed into the Innobiz Incubation Programme

Model, receiving structured support for the establishment of a small business. Participation in the Hackathon Business Bootcamp further enhanced entrepreneurial capacity through hands-on training, expert mentorship, and access to innovation resources. The awarding of seed funding through a competitive grant process supported product testing and packaging, demonstrating the value of integrated entrepreneurship support pathways.

Entrepreneurial participation within the Somatology discipline also continued to grow. A postgraduate student reached the finals of the Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, a collaborative initiative between DUT and the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities, highlighting the competitiveness of DUT students on global innovation platforms. In parallel, another student engaged in an international entrepreneurship development programme facilitated through Innobiz and progressed to apply for seed funding to support an established business venture.

Curriculum-linked entrepreneurship initiatives further strengthened applied learning and social innovation. Within the Basic Medical Sciences Department, in collaboration with Somatology, students enrolled in a Public Health module engaged in an entrepreneurial project aligned with faculty-led food security initiatives. Students were tasked with identifying food insecurity challenges within local communities and developing innovative entrepreneurial or social enterprise solutions to address these needs. This ongoing project integrates entrepreneurship, social responsibility, and experiential learning, reinforcing DUT's Site of Practice model.

Within the Department of Hospitality and Tourism, an Advanced Diploma in Tourism student participated in the inaugural G20 Tourism Hackathon held in Mpumalanga, a national initiative launched in June 2025 to stimulate artificial intelligence-enabled



FAI participants at the 2025 BRICS Vocational Skills China International Finals Competition



solutions for inclusive and sustainable tourism growth. Competing in multidisciplinary teams drawn from universities across South Africa, the DUT-affiliated team won the national competition by conceptualizing an innovative Hologram Hub - a digital platform designed to enable rural communities to preserve and showcase cultural heritage while attracting tourism and supporting job creation. This achievement reflects the effectiveness of DUT's entrepreneurship education in equipping students with applied digital, problem-solving, and innovation skills.

International entrepreneurship engagement was further advanced through a collaborative competition facilitated by the IEP in partnership with Pharos University in Egypt. The initiative engaged students and staff in an online entrepreneurship challenge culminating in an in-person event hosted in Egypt. This programme demonstrated DUT's commitment to experiential, cross-cultural entrepreneurship education, embedding international collaboration into innovation training and exposing participants to diverse innovation ecosystems.

Across these initiatives, entrepreneurship programmes and competitions provided platforms for innovation testing, business model validation, and skills development. By integrating local and international opportunities, competitive funding mechanisms, and curriculum-based entrepreneurship, DUT continues to equip students and innovators with the capacity to respond to complex challenges, including economic inclusion, climate resilience, and social transformation.

In summary, entrepreneurship programmes and competitions at DUT serve as vital enablers of innovation progression, student development, and enterprise creation. Through integrated pathways that combine incubation, curriculum-based projects, funding opportunities, and international collaboration, the University continues to foster an entrepreneurial culture grounded in impact and sustainability. These initiatives strengthen DUT's innovation ecosystem and advance its strategic commitment to producing adaptive, entrepreneurial graduates and scalable solutions aligned with ENVISION2030.

2.7.3 Technological Advancements and Patents

Technological advancement and intellectual property development at DUT reflect a maturing innovation pipeline that is progressively translating research outputs into commercial-ready technologies and enterprise opportunities. Through structured governance, incubation, and commercialization pathways, the University continues to strengthen its capacity to generate protected intellectual property, advance technology readiness, and drive third-stream income.

During 2025, several commercial units emerged from the technology transfer portfolio, encompassing both protected intellectual property and business ventures. Oversight of this portfolio was provided through the interim intellectual property management function, ensuring custodianship, compliance, and



DUT Representatives at the PURCO Conference 2025

strategic progression of innovations. Three patents associated with technologies at TRL 8 reached the pre-commercialization stage, while two patents at TRL 7 advanced through seed funding processes. In addition, three prototypes at TRL 7 reached readiness for product testing within their respective sectors, subject to the finalization of seed funding and pre-commercialization support.

These innovations progressed through the DUT TTI Incubation Programme using internal funding instruments. Upon exit from incubation, projects transitioned into the Commercialization Portfolio, jointly managed with the Project Management function. This transition does not signal the end of the innovation lifecycle but rather marks progression to a phase where external funding, strategic partnerships, and advanced commercialization mechanisms are pursued to support high-end scale-up beyond the limits of internal funding.

Commercialization funding requirements are informed by Techno-Economic Feasibility Studies conducted for each project. These studies generate comprehensive outputs, including detailed financial models projecting business value, bankable business plans, investor-ready pitch decks, and short-term contractual instruments designed to secure early-stage funding. This evidence-based approach strengthens investor confidence and positions DUT innovations for sustainable market entry.

To further institutionalize commercialization, approval was granted for the establishment of commercial arms within selected academic departments, aligned to their disciplinary strengths, technical capabilities, and market offerings. These structures are mandated to support technology transfer, enterprise development, and third-stream income generation. Advanced discussions are underway with departments including Textile Sciences and Fabric Technology, Applied Chemistry, Audio and Visual Technology, Art and Design, Biotechnology and Food Sciences, and Homeopathy.

Practical implementation has commenced within the Textile Sciences and Fabric Technology discipline, where commercial structures and business projects have reached advanced stages of development. Full-scale operationalization of the commercial unit is anticipated by June 2026, with a feasibility study currently underway to determine capital and operational requirements. A flagship initiative within this unit involves the development, manufacture, and production of DUT academic and professional regalia, including graduation attire, under a business model designed to internalize production and scale participation within the graduation gown market.

Entrepreneurship development remains integral to technological advancement and commercialization. The Innobiz DUT continued to embed entrepreneurial thinking across the institution through

collaborative platforms such as an Entrepreneurship Coordinators Workshop, which aligned innovation champions around shared priorities and strategic planning for 2026. The Centre also participated in the University of South Africa (UNISA) - hosted EDHE Lekgotla in 2025, themed Entrepreneurship for Sustainability, contributing to national dialogue on the role of universities in inclusive innovation and sustainable enterprise development.

Student and innovator exposure to national innovation ecosystems was further strengthened through participation in the Studentpreneurs Indaba in 2025, themed Entrepreneurship for Sustainability, where incubated students developed entrepreneurial competencies, expanded professional networks, and engaged with peers and mentors. DUT representatives from procurement, real estate, and Innobiz also participated in the Purchasing Consortium of Higher Education Institutions (PURCO) SA Conference and Exhibition in 2025, showcasing incubated innovations to potential investors, industry partners, and public sector stakeholders.

Faculty-led entrepreneurship initiatives continued to complement technology commercialization efforts. These included business plan development and pitch evaluations within information technology disciplines, entrepreneurship-focused faculty events within health sciences, and guest lectures in engineering and geomatics. Collectively, these activities strengthened the integration of innovation, entrepreneurship, and applied research across academic programmes.

International partnerships further reinforced DUT's technological innovation and patent development capacity. Through engagements facilitated by IEP, including the Czechia Partnership Activation Tour in 2025, DUT opened pathways for joint research and innovation in areas such as smart technologies, renewable energy, advanced materials, and artificial intelligence-enabled solutions. These collaborations support co-development of technologies, shared intellectual property opportunities, and international commercialization pathways, aligned with sustainable development goals and Africa-centred priorities.

In summary, technological advancements and patent development at DUT reflect a strategically aligned innovation ecosystem that integrates incubation, intellectual property management, commercialization, entrepreneurship, and international collaboration. Through disciplined progression along the technology readiness scale, robust feasibility assessment, and the establishment of department-based commercial structures, the University continues to translate research into scalable, market-relevant solutions. These efforts strengthen DUT's role as a knowledge leader in applied research and innovation-driven entrepreneurship, contributing meaningfully to third-stream income generation and advancing the strategic objectives of ENVISION2030.

“ Practical implementation has commenced within the Textile Sciences and Fabric Technology discipline, where commercial structures and business projects have reached advanced stages of development. ”





3. THIRD-STREAM INCOME

During 2025, Durban University of Technology (DUT) generated approximately R80 million in quantified third-stream income across research, innovation, teaching and learning, internationalisation, and philanthropic activities. This figure reflects confirmed and realised income streams recorded during the reporting period and excludes projected funding and unquantified decentralised revenue, underscoring both the strength of current performance and the significant growth potential embedded within the University's broader engagement ecosystem.

Third-stream income generation was underpinned by a diversified and mutually reinforcing revenue mix, with particularly strong performance in skills development, applied research, innovation partnerships, donor funding, and international collaboration. The largest contributor remained Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and SETA-funded programmes, which generated R56.37 million in support of 1,079 students across multiple faculties. Beyond its financial contribution, this income stream delivered direct developmental impact through student stipends, structured workplace exposure, and enhanced graduate employability, reinforcing DUT's mandate as a responsive, skills-driven institution.

Applied research and innovation-driven income continued to strengthen the University's position within national research and innovation systems. Research institutes and innovation units generated R7.37 million, notably through applied research, postgraduate training, and industry-aligned innovation initiatives, complemented by additional funding secured through national innovation agencies. These investments supported technology development, research commercialisation, and postgraduate capacity development, reinforcing pathways from research to societal and economic impact.

Philanthropic fundraising and donor-supported initiatives formed a critical component of the third-stream portfolio. Through coordinated efforts, R11.59 million was raised to support student bursaries, food security initiatives, community engagement programmes, and stipends. Complementary faculty-based and external partner bursary funding further strengthened student access and retention, including sustained contributions from national

science partners and industry collaborators. While primarily student-directed, these funds play a vital role in strengthening institutional sustainability, external partnerships, and social impact.

Internationalisation-linked income streams continued to expand through strategic partnerships and capacity-building programmes. International collaboration initiatives generated R1.90 million, derived from international student mobility, collaborative research, and professional development programmes. In addition, the Confucius Institute secured R2.77 million in international partner funding to support programme delivery, highlighting the value of long-standing global institutional partnerships in diversifying and stabilising third-stream income.

Faculty-based income generation also contributed meaningfully to the third-stream ecosystem, with R3.99 million secured through conference hosting, applied academic activities, and practice-based platforms. Faculties continued to advance mechanisms that enable accredited short courses and professional training offerings in alignment with institutional policy frameworks, creating further opportunities for decentralised income generation and staff development. While not fully quantified, clinical services, short courses, and departmental commercial activities remain important contributors to experiential learning and income diversification.

In addition to externally generated income, the effective management of research productivity and postgraduate systems supported the University's long-term revenue sustainability. A high success rate of 94.07% in DHET-accredited research output claims for 2024 reinforces the stability of future block grant income, while consistent output volumes are anticipated for 2025,

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Recipients of the Systems, Applications and Products in Data Processing (SAP) bursaries

subject to audit processes. The University also invested R3.36 million in postgraduate supervision incentives linked to master's and doctoral completions, strengthening research throughput and capacity development. Strategic cost efficiencies were realised through reduced publishing expenditure, reflecting a shift towards sustainable open-access and transformative publishing models.

Looking ahead, DUT has secured projected funding exceeding R4.4 million from the National Intellectual Property Management Office for technology transfer support, anticipated in 2026 subject to formal confirmation. When combined with unquantified revenue streams from innovation commercialisation, clinical services, short

courses, and international partnerships, this projection signals a robust and expanding third-stream income pipeline beyond the current reporting period.

Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate DUT's growing capacity to diversify revenue sources, reduce reliance on traditional funding streams, and strategically reinvest third-stream income into research excellence, student success, innovation development, and community impact. The sustained growth, diversification, and strategic alignment of third-stream income strongly advance the University's financial sustainability and directly support its transformational and developmental agenda.

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4. ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

The fourth quarter of 2025 marked a period of significant achievement for DUT, reflecting sustained progress across research, innovation, international engagement, teaching and learning, and institutional development. Collectively, these milestones demonstrate the University's capacity to translate strategy into impact and to advance its ENVISION2030 strategic objectives through coordinated, cross-functional effort.

In the area of Research, Innovation and Technology Advancement, TTI recorded notable progress within the innovation pipeline. Eighteen academic projects were successfully advanced from lower Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) to levels above TRL 5, with six projects reaching the pre-commercialization stage at TRLs 6–7. These advancements reflect strengthened project governance, technical development, and readiness for market engagement. Innovation activity resulted in ten intellectual property outputs, comprising two full patents, five registered designs, and three trademarks, reinforcing DUT's growing IP portfolio and commercialization potential.

In support of innovation visibility and ecosystem engagement, the directorate participated in a national intellectual property conference, sponsored special innovation awards at the Eskom International Expo for Young Scientists, and showcased DUT innovations at Science Forum South Africa. In parallel, techno-economic feasibility studies were completed for pre-commercialization projects, and Innovation Executive Committees were established to provide structured oversight, accountability, and strategic direction for ongoing initiatives.

In supporting Student Excellence and Academic Recognition, a final-year Radiography student from the FHS was awarded the prestigious Abe Bailey Scholarship for 2025. This achievement, secured through competitive selection against candidates from multiple universities, reflects both individual excellence and the quality of academic preparation and mentorship within the faculty.

Internationalization and Global Engagement, supported by IEP delivered substantial milestones aligned with Africa-centred and global engagement priorities. DUT formalized memoranda of understanding with ten international universities and significantly expanded its continental and Global South partnerships through the African Partnership University Alliance and related networks. The division successfully designed and delivered flagship lecture series under the APUA and UNESCO Chair platforms, assumed leadership roles at major international congresses and workshops, and contributed to scholarly publications on internationalization in higher education. These achievements strengthened DUT's global academic footprint and positioned the University as a thought leader in inclusive and sustainable internationalization.





TTI Representatives at the Science Forum South Africa (SFSA) 2025 Conference

In strengthening Research Output and Capacity Development, IWWT recorded strong research performance, with four peer-reviewed journal articles accepted for publication, half of which appeared in high-impact journals with an average impact factor of 5.4. Additional scholarly recognition included acceptance of two conference presentations and one invited lecture, underscoring the Institute's contribution to advancing water and wastewater research with societal relevance. The Institute also reached an important academic milestone, with two doctoral candidates and one master's candidate scheduled to graduate during the spring graduation ceremony, reflecting sustained investment in postgraduate training and research excellence.

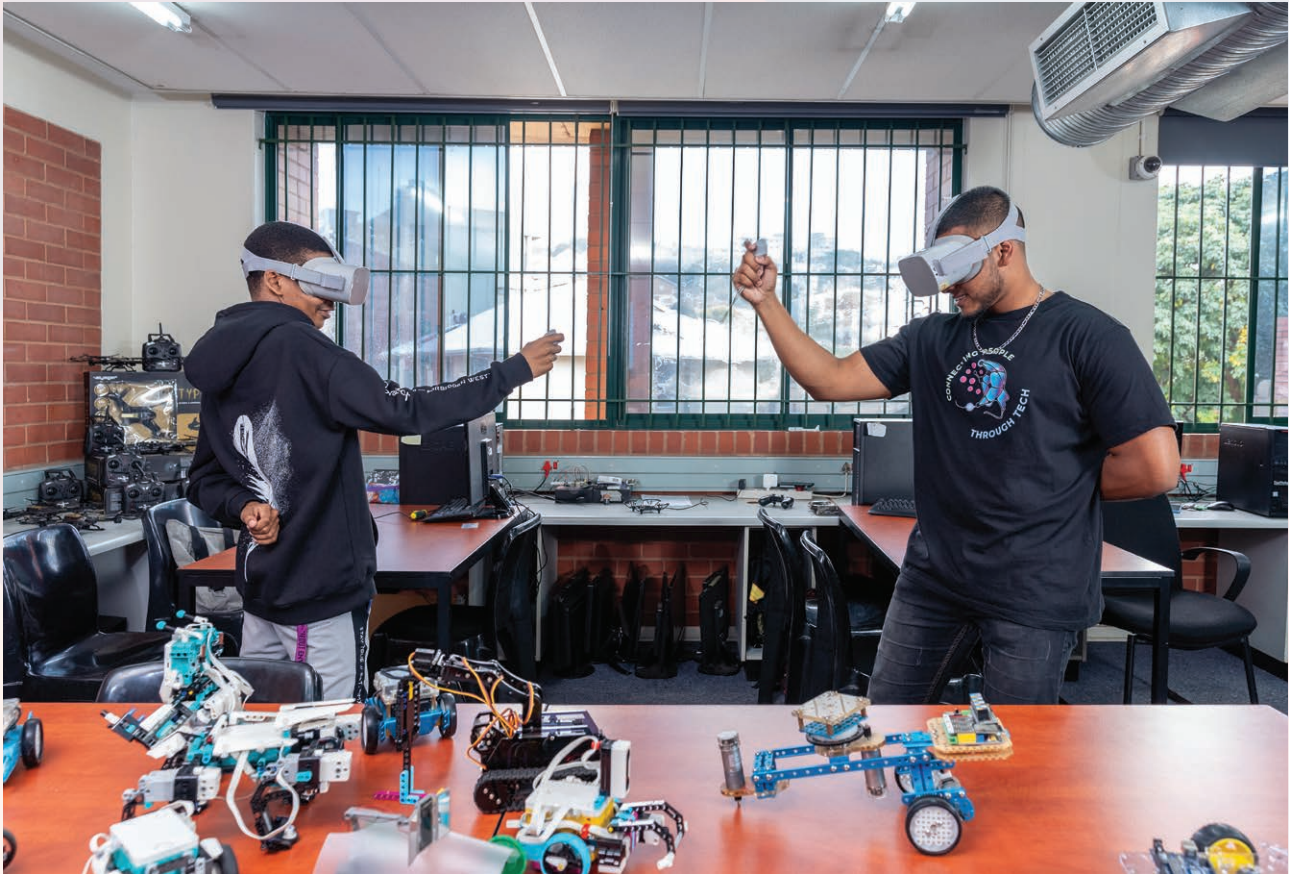
In advancing Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Innovation, CELT contributed significantly to institutional advancement through strategic teaching and learning initiatives. In collaboration with national postgraduate support programmes and engaged scholarship partners, CELT delivered scholarly contributions addressing the integration of technology in research and the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence, including its implications for cognitive development and academic integrity.

A key milestone was the introduction of the Let's Chat Online (LCO) series, designed to support early-career academics and scholars in navigating the hidden curriculum and academic power dynamics. Grounded in a professional learning and development framework, the initiative aligns with national transformation imperatives and DUT's ENVISION2030 strategy, with full implementation planned for 2026 following ethical clearance.

International recognition of teaching and learning innovation was achieved when a DUT-authored paper on AI-assisted course design received an Outstanding Paper Award at an international educational technology conference in Barcelona. This accolade validates the global relevance and scholarly quality of DUT's work in digital pedagogy and artificial intelligence. CELT further extended institutional impact through national knowledge-sharing initiatives, including contributions to webinars on AI in education, reinforcing DUT's role as a sector leader in digital fluency.

In support for Applied Learning, Pedagogical Innovation and Interdisciplinarity, CELT supported 51 Project-Based Learning and Design Thinking initiatives across multiple faculties, alongside curriculum transformation workshops. These initiatives fostered interfaculty collaboration, embedded innovative pedagogies, and enhanced graduate readiness for complex, real-world challenges. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning short course culminated in 19 scholarly projects, many of which featured interdisciplinary collaboration, strengthening cross-faculty engagement and innovation in teaching practice.

Scholarly engagement was further advanced through national and institutional platforms such as the Learning, Teaching, Research, Innovation and Engagement Conference and the hosting of a Project-Based Learning and Design Thinking Exhibition. These platforms showcased research-informed teaching innovation and reinforced DUT's positioning as a responsive and engaged university.



A major institutional milestone was achieved through curriculum programme revision and accreditation. Guided by the Philosophy of Education and CELT-led strategic support, DUT successfully secured accreditation for the interdisciplinary Bachelor of Accounting in Public Sector Accounting under the Emerging Fields of Study framework. This achievement strengthens DUT's contribution to public sector capacity and governance while demonstrating alignment between curriculum innovation, institutional strategy, and national development priorities.

Another significant institutional milestone achieved during the reporting period was DUT's strong performance in third-stream income generation. During 2025, the University generated approximately R80 million in quantified third-stream income across research, innovation, teaching and learning, internationalization, and philanthropic activities. This achievement reflects confirmed and realized income streams and underscores the effectiveness of DUT's integrated engagement model, which leverages partnerships, applied

research, innovation commercialization, and skills development to strengthen financial sustainability. The scale and diversity of these revenue streams demonstrate DUT's growing capacity to diversify income, reduce reliance on traditional funding sources, and strategically reinvest resources into research excellence, student success, innovation development, and community impact.

The achievements and milestones recorded during the fourth quarter of 2025 reflect DUT's sustained progress in advancing research excellence, innovation development, international engagement, teaching and learning transformation, and institutional capacity. These accomplishments demonstrate the University's ability to operationalize ENVISION2030 through integrated action, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to societal impact. Collectively, they position DUT as a dynamic, engaged, and future-oriented institution, capable of responding effectively to local, continental, and global challenges.

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The achievements and milestones recorded during the fourth quarter of 2025 reflect DUT's sustained progress in advancing research excellence, innovation development, international engagement, teaching and learning transformation, and institutional capacity.

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5. IMPACT AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) has made a substantial institutional, community, and societal impact by strengthening DUT's innovation pipeline and embedding a culture of applied research and entrepreneurship. Through targeted awareness and activation initiatives - including guest lectures across academic departments, participation in Faculty and Departmental Innovation Days, Entrepreneurship Day, Research Day, and engagement at local and international conferences and workshops - TTI has successfully identified and supported innovations that have progressed into structured technology development pathways. These processes are governed by Innovation Executive Committees (IECs), ensuring robust oversight, accountability, and strategic alignment across the innovation lifecycle.

DUT's participation in the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists, through the sponsorship of Special Awards and the subsequent mentorship and incubation of learner projects, has positioned the University as a pioneering institution in nurturing early-stage innovation talent. This initiative has strengthened DUT's innovation pipeline while expanding stakeholder networks across the schooling, research, and innovation ecosystem. Further visibility and impact were achieved through DUT's exhibition at Science Forum South Africa 2025, which deepened relationships with key national stakeholders, including the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. These engagements generated expressions of interest in DUT-developed technologies and opened pathways for structured collaboration, including site visits by national officials to DUT laboratories and project value-chain sites associated with initiatives such as the Bio Brick project and environmental remediation solutions.

Feasibility studies completed during the reporting period have played a critical role in translating innovation into enterprise. These studies have produced bankable business plans, financial models, and investor-ready documentation, creating clear commercialization pathways and instruments for engagement with funders and industry partners. A six-month extension period has been allocated to secure further external funding for selected projects. Intellectual property arising from these initiatives has been formally protected and incorporated into DUT's commercialization portfolio, where spin-offs and start-up ventures are being developed. Notably, projects such as Chiropractic, SmartQx, and wastewater technologies have advanced to TRL 8, entered the business value chain, and secured paying customers, demonstrating tangible economic and societal impact.

CSERI has continued to strengthen DUT's entrepreneurial ecosystem through structured incubation and pre-incubation programmes. During the reporting period, 30 small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) participated in a 12-month incubation programme, while a further 30 completed a six-month pre-incubation programme. The demographic profile of participating enterprises reflects strong inclusivity and transformation outcomes: women-owned businesses accounted for over 60%, youth-owned

enterprises exceeded 55%, alumni-owned businesses represented over 8%, and enterprises owned by differently abled individuals exceeded 3%.

Through the Innobiz DUT, significant student-focused impact was recorded between September and October 2025. A total of 533 students were engaged through entrepreneurship training and exposure initiatives, 26 student businesses received structured mentorship, and 19 student enterprises underwent operational verification visits. International exposure was facilitated for three learners through participation in the Agrolnter School Programme in Moscow, while 29 primary school learners from Hluhluwe were introduced to university life through an experiential campus programme. Five students were selected to represent DUT at the Global Innovation and Start-Up University (GISU) Finals. Collectively, student-led enterprises across incubation, post-incubation, and alumni phases have contributed to the creation of approximately 200 jobs and generated an estimated R100 million in consolidated turnover (unaudited), underscoring the economic impact of DUT's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The IEP delivered significant institutional, local, and global impact by operationalizing the Quadruple Helix Partnerships model and aligning international engagement with the ENVISION2030 perspectives of stewardship, sustainability, and transformative collaboration. Through strategic memoranda of understanding, partnership activation tours, and capacity-building programmes, IEP cultivated a dynamic ecosystem for knowledge exchange, innovation, and societal impact.

At institutional level, IEP strengthened DUT's academic and research profile through collaborative research initiatives with African, BRICS, and European partners, resulting in scholarly outputs such as journal articles and book chapters addressing decolonial internationalization, Global South cooperation, and policy reform. Curriculum internationalization was significantly enhanced through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) workshops and strategy sessions, leading to the launch of 15 new COIL projects and a 30% increase in student participation in internationalized modules. More than 42 international partnerships were activated

through engagements at the Global Sustainable Development Congress, the Association of African Universities Conference, and targeted partnership activation tours, creating structured pathways for staff and student mobility, postgraduate co-supervision, and joint research.

At community and global levels, IEP advanced social innovation and intercultural competence through collaborations with Reconstructed Living Labs and the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation, as well as through UNESCO Story Circles training. Community-focused initiatives, including Nelson Mandela Day outreach activities, mobilized staff, students, and civic leaders in support of vulnerable communities. Public lectures and guest series delivered under the UNESCO Chair reached more than 500 participants across Africa, fostering dialogue on leadership, social justice, intercultural competence, and inclusive development.

Measurable outcomes from IEP initiatives include the training of 120 participants in UNESCO Story Circles, the activation of 15 COIL projects, the training of 60 executives and managers through internationalization strategy workshops, the formalization of more than 10 new memoranda of understanding, and engagement with over 500 participants through lectures and guest series. Third-stream income generated through international mobility, collaborative research, and professional development initiatives exceeded R3 million, reinforcing DUT's position as a continental leader in sustainability research and innovation.

The IWWT made a significant contribution to technological advancement, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic development. The Institute's research and innovation projects address critical regional and national water and wastewater challenges, translating laboratory-based research into scalable, real-world solutions. These initiatives have delivered measurable environmental benefits, including improved treatment efficiency, reduced contamination, and enhanced resource conservation, contributing to more resilient water systems and healthier ecosystems.

Beyond technical innovation, IWWT prioritized science communication and public engagement to extend the impact of its work. Through articles, videos, webinars, and interactive digital content, the Institute increased public awareness of water quality, sanitation, and environmental stewardship. These efforts have strengthened community understanding of the link between water management, public health, and climate resilience, reinforcing DUT's role as a trusted knowledge partner in environmental sustainability.

Collectively, the impacts and contributions outlined above demonstrate DUT's ability to translate research, innovation, and partnership into measurable societal, economic, and environmental outcomes. Through integrated technology transfer, entrepreneurship development, international collaboration, and community engagement, the University continues to strengthen its relevance, sustainability, and developmental role. These contributions affirm DUT's positioning as an engaged, innovation-driven institution that delivers value locally, continentally, and globally.



Mr Steve Farr, the Alliance Secretariat Executive Director presenting the 2025 Chairman's Award to DUT's Professor Fulufhelo Nemavhola, DVC: RIE



6. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The 2025 reporting period surfaced a set of interconnected challenges and opportunities that cut across institutional systems, partnerships, and delivery models. While these challenges constrained the pace of implementation in certain areas, they also provided critical insights that now inform targeted improvement.

6.1 SYSTEMS AND PROCUREMENT CONSTRAINTS

Challenge:

A key systemic challenge identified during the period relates to procurement processes and approval mechanisms, which affected the progression of several high-potential, externally aligned projects. Delays in approval for specialized equipment, sole-supplier procurement, and advanced digital tools constrained the advancement of innovation initiatives, despite strong technical merit and demonstrated industry interest. Additional barriers included supplier reluctance due to delayed payment histories, limited availability of novel materials within approved supplier lists, slow approval flows across requisition stages, and requests for upfront payments. These constraints resulted in delayed project implementation, partial delivery of materials, and, in some cases, the discontinuation of promising initiatives.

Opportunity:

These experiences highlight the need for differentiated procurement pathways for research, innovation, and digital development. There is a clear opportunity to review procurement frameworks to better accommodate specialized, high-risk, high-impact innovation projects, including mechanisms for rapid procurement, approved innovation suppliers, and conditional or phased approvals linked to external funding. Strengthening alignment between procurement, finance, and innovation timelines will significantly enhance institutional agility and innovation throughput.

6.2 FUNDING CYCLES, BUDGET TIMING, AND PROJECT CONTINUITY

Challenge:

Misalignment between funding cycles, budget lapses, and project timelines disrupted planned incubation and innovation activities. Delays in reinstating lapsed budgets required projects to restart procurement processes, resulting in lost momentum, repeated administrative effort, and constrained delivery windows. Short implementation timeframes further compounded these challenges.

Opportunity:

There is an opportunity to introduce more flexible financial planning models for innovation and incubation programmes,

including multi-year budget commitments, carry-over mechanisms for approved innovation funding, and improved alignment between fiscal cycles and programme delivery. These measures would protect project continuity, improve planning certainty, and maximize return on investment in innovation development.

6.3 CAPACITY AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Challenge:

Across the institution, limited human resource capacity - particularly in specialized administrative, partnership management, and support roles - placed pressure on programme delivery, monitoring, and sustainability. Lean staffing models, reliance on contract staff, and competing institutional priorities constrained the ability to scale successful initiatives and sustain high levels of engagement.

Opportunity:

This challenge underscores the need for targeted capacity investment in strategic functions such as partnership management, innovation support, postgraduate coordination, and engaged scholarship. Strengthening professional support capacity will enable more effective activation, monitoring, and scaling of high-impact initiatives, while reducing operational risk and staff burnout.

6.4 DATA MANAGEMENT, MONITORING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Challenge:

Fragmented data systems and inconsistent record-keeping limited the institution's ability to comprehensively track partnerships, outcomes, and impact. Low response rates to institutional data collection exercises further highlighted gaps in accountability and awareness, constraining evidence-based decision-making and strategic reporting.

Opportunity:

There is a strong opportunity to establish centralized, digital systems for managing partnerships, projects, and outcomes, supported by clear reporting protocols and accountability mechanisms. The development of qualitative and outcomes-focused data instruments will strengthen monitoring and evaluation, support strategic alignment, and enhance institutional learning.

6.5 VISIBILITY, ACCESS, AND DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONSTRAINTS

Challenge:

Certain academic and professional fields face structural challenges related to visibility, resourcing, and access to specialized infrastructure. Limited awareness of some professions, resource-intensive training requirements, and equipment shortages constrained experiential learning and professional readiness in specific disciplines.

Opportunity:

These constraints present opportunities to expand community-facing service platforms, satellite facilities, shared infrastructure models, and industry partnerships. Such approaches can enhance experiential learning, increase professional visibility, broaden access, and strengthen societal impact, particularly in underserved and rural contexts.

6.6 INTERNATIONALIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP OPTIMIZATION

Challenge:

While international engagement expanded significantly, challenges emerged around coordination, data consolidation, and sustained activation of partnerships. Limited administrative capacity and the absence of integrated systems constrained the ability to fully leverage the growing network of international collaborations.

Opportunity:

The institutional mapping of partnerships has created a strong foundation for strategic consolidation. Opportunities include prioritizing high-impact partnerships, expanding digital internationalization through COIL and virtual exchange, strengthening postgraduate co-supervision models, and leveraging

Africa-centred networks to enhance global visibility while managing resource constraints.

6.7 SUSTAINABILITY, SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT, AND FUTURE READINESS

Challenge:

Declining external bursary funding, resource-intensive societal challenges, and increasing demand for public engagement placed pressure on research and community-facing initiatives. At the same time, growing expectations around sustainability, digital transformation, and social responsiveness require adaptive institutional responses.

Opportunity:

Emerging trends - including digital internationalization, Africa-centred collaboration aligned with Agenda 2063, sustainability-integrated curricula, and applied research partnerships - present significant opportunities to scale impact. By embedding these trends into institutional systems and strategy, DUT can strengthen its contribution to societal transformation while enhancing resilience and relevance.

The challenges encountered during 2025 are not indicative of institutional weakness, but rather of a university operating at the leading edge of innovation, engagement, and transformation. Importantly, these challenges have clarified priorities and revealed concrete pathways for improvement. By addressing systemic constraints, strengthening capacity, improving coordination, and leveraging emerging opportunities, DUT is well positioned to deepen impact, enhance efficiency, and advance its strategic objectives. These insights will inform continuous improvement and guide the next phase of implementation under ENVISION2030, ensuring that the University remains responsive, sustainable, and future-ready.



DUT Business School Explores Climate-Change Partnership with Universities for Development Studies



7. FUTURE OUTLOOK

The period ahead positions Durban University of Technology to consolidate gains made in 2025 and transition decisively from activation to scale. Across research, innovation, entrepreneurship, internationalization, teaching and learning, and community engagement, several cross-cutting themes have emerged that will shape the University's trajectory in the next phase of implementation under ENVISION2030.

Advancing Innovation to Commercial Scale

A central focus of the future outlook is the acceleration of innovation along the full technology development and commercialization continuum. Building on the progress achieved through feasibility studies, intellectual property protection, and incubation, the University will prioritize advancing selected technologies to market readiness and enterprise formation. This includes strengthening institutional commercialization models across academic departments, formalizing departmental commercial arms, and supporting the transition of innovations into sustainable spin-offs and revenue-generating ventures.

Strategic flagship initiatives - such as the internalization and commercial production of DUT's professional academic regalia - signal a shift towards institutional-scale commercialization that integrates sustainability, design innovation, and third-stream income generation. These initiatives demonstrate how applied research, creative capability, and operational systems can converge to deliver measurable institutional and societal value.

Strengthening Entrepreneurial Capability and Ecosystems

The next phase will deepen the University's entrepreneurial culture by aligning incubation and entrepreneurship programmes with international best practice and accreditation standards. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening pre-incubation and incubation pipelines, expanding access for students, alumni, and community-based entrepreneurs, and embedding entrepreneurship within curricula through project-based learning, design thinking, and challenge-led education.

Sustained attention will be given to financial sustainability models for entrepreneurship support, ensuring that programmes remain responsive, scalable, and impactful while meeting the evolving needs of SMMEs and innovation-driven enterprises. These efforts will reinforce DUT's positioning as a Site of Practice where learning, enterprise, and societal relevance intersect.

Digital, Africa-Centred and Inclusive Internationalization

DUT's future internationalization agenda will be shaped by an intentional shift towards digital, Africa-centred, and impact-driven engagement. Expansion of Collaborative Online International

Learning (COIL), virtual exchange, and blended mobility will increase participation while reducing resource constraints. These modalities will be integrated into postgraduate programmes, industry-linked projects, and research team development to strengthen academic depth and global relevance.

At the same time, the University will continue to strengthen strategic partnerships across Africa, the Global South, and selected global regions, positioning DUT as a regional hub for postgraduate education, research excellence, and knowledge exchange. Participation in flagship international platforms will amplify DUT's leadership in sustainability, innovation, and transformative internationalization grounded in reciprocity and contextual relevance.

System Strengthening, Data Integration, and Capacity Building

There is need to strengthen the importance of robust systems and institutional capacity to support growth and complexity. The next phase will prioritize the implementation of integrated digital systems to manage partnerships, projects, outcomes, and impact in real time. These systems will strengthen accountability, evidence-based decision-making, and institutional learning.

Capacity-building will focus on postgraduate co-supervision, interdisciplinary research team development, innovation support, and partnership activation. Targeted investment in human resources and professional support structures will enable sustained delivery, reduce operational risk, and ensure continuity across strategic initiatives.

Research with Societal Impact and Environmental Stewardship

Looking ahead, DUT will continue to foreground research that responds to societal and environmental challenges, particularly in areas such as public health, water security, sustainability, and climate resilience. Interdisciplinary collaboration, integration of emerging technologies, and strong engagement with government, industry, and communities will ensure that research outputs translate into practical, scalable solutions. Public engagement and science communication will remain integral to this agenda, reinforcing DUT's role as a trusted knowledge partner and contributor to informed public discourse.

Curriculum Innovation and Adaptive Graduates

Curriculum transformation will remain central to the University's future direction, with continued emphasis on emerging and interdisciplinary fields of study, ethical and responsible use of digital technologies, and the development of adaptive, socially responsive graduates. Innovation in pedagogy, assessment, and learning design will support graduate readiness for complex, uncertain, and rapidly evolving professional environments.

Collectively, these priorities position DUT to move confidently into the next phase of its development - one defined by scale, coherence, and sustained impact. The future outlook reflects a University that is learning from experience, strengthening its systems, and aligning its ambitions with its capacity to deliver. Guided by ENVISION2030, DUT is well positioned to deepen its contribution to knowledge, innovation, and societal transformation, advancing its role as a leading African University of Technology committed to excellence, relevance, and stewardship.



8. CONCLUSION

The fourth quarter of 2025 marked a defining period in Durban University of Technology's journey toward becoming a deeply engaged, innovation-driven, and socially responsive university. Across research, innovation, entrepreneurship, teaching and learning, internationalization, industry collaboration, and community engagement, the University demonstrated increasing institutional maturity and an enhanced capacity to translate knowledge into tangible societal, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Despite systemic constraints - most notably in procurement processes, administrative complexity, and capacity pressures - the University sustained momentum and delivered a breadth of initiatives that were implemented at institutional, national, continental, and global levels, in several cases for the first time. These engagements collectively reflect a university that is learning, adapting, and strengthening its systems while remaining firmly committed to impact, relevance, and public value.

Research and innovation activities progressed steadily from conceptualization through to application, commercial readiness, and early market entry. The advancement of technologies along the Technology Readiness Levels, the growth of protected intellectual property, and the development of feasibility-driven commercial pathways signal a decisive shift toward embedding innovation and entrepreneurship as core institutional practices. These outcomes were reinforced by a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem that prioritizes inclusivity, student participation, youth and women-led enterprise, and job creation, positioning DUT as a Site of Practice where learning, enterprise, and societal needs intersect.

International engagement emerged as a powerful catalyst for institutional growth and transformation. Through Africa-centred, Global South, and strategically selected global partnerships, the University expanded its research footprint, strengthened postgraduate and staff mobility, and integrated international perspectives into curricula and pedagogy. Digital internationalization, collaborative online learning, and capacity-building initiatives enabled broader participation while advancing equity and sustainability. These efforts not only enhanced DUT's academic standing but also ensured that internationalization served local relevance and continental development priorities.

Equally significant was the University's sustained commitment to community and social engagement. Through applied research, professional services, public education, and co-created community initiatives, DUT demonstrated the practical value of scholarship in addressing pressing challenges such as public health, water security, food insecurity, education access, and social inclusion. These engagements reflect a Quadruple Helix approach in action, where academia, industry, government, and communities collaborate to generate shared solutions and mutual benefit.



Minister Buti Manamela, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology with Ms Nontoko Ngcobo from Innobiz at the PURCO Conference 2025

A notable institutional achievement underpinning these outcomes was the generation of approximately R80 million in quantified third-stream income during 2025. This performance reflects the effectiveness of DUT's integrated engagement model and its growing ability to diversify revenue streams, strengthen financial sustainability, and reinvest strategically in research excellence, student success, innovation development, and community impact. Importantly, this figure excludes projected and unquantified income, signaling further growth potential.

Taken together, the engagements and outcomes of this period affirm a university that is confidently aligning purpose with practice. DUT's progress is not defined solely by outputs or income generated, but by the quality of its partnerships, the inclusivity of its approaches, and the integrity with which it stewards knowledge in service of society. The University's ability to operate across disciplines, sectors, and borders - while remaining grounded in local realities - speaks to the strength of its vision and the collective commitment of its community.

As DUT looks ahead, the foundations laid in 2025 position the institution to deepen impact, scale innovation, and strengthen coherence across its academic project. ENVISION2030 continues to provide a unifying compass, calling the University to act with courage, responsibility, and foresight. With sustained focus on system strengthening, capacity building, and partnership optimization, DUT is well placed to advance its role as a leading African University of Technology - one that not only responds to change, but actively shapes a more just, sustainable, and knowledge-driven future.

Authors: Prof Fulufhelo Nemavhola – DVC RIE
Ms Phumzile Xulu – Engagement Practitioner
Ms Phumeza Msongelwa – Community Engagement Liaison

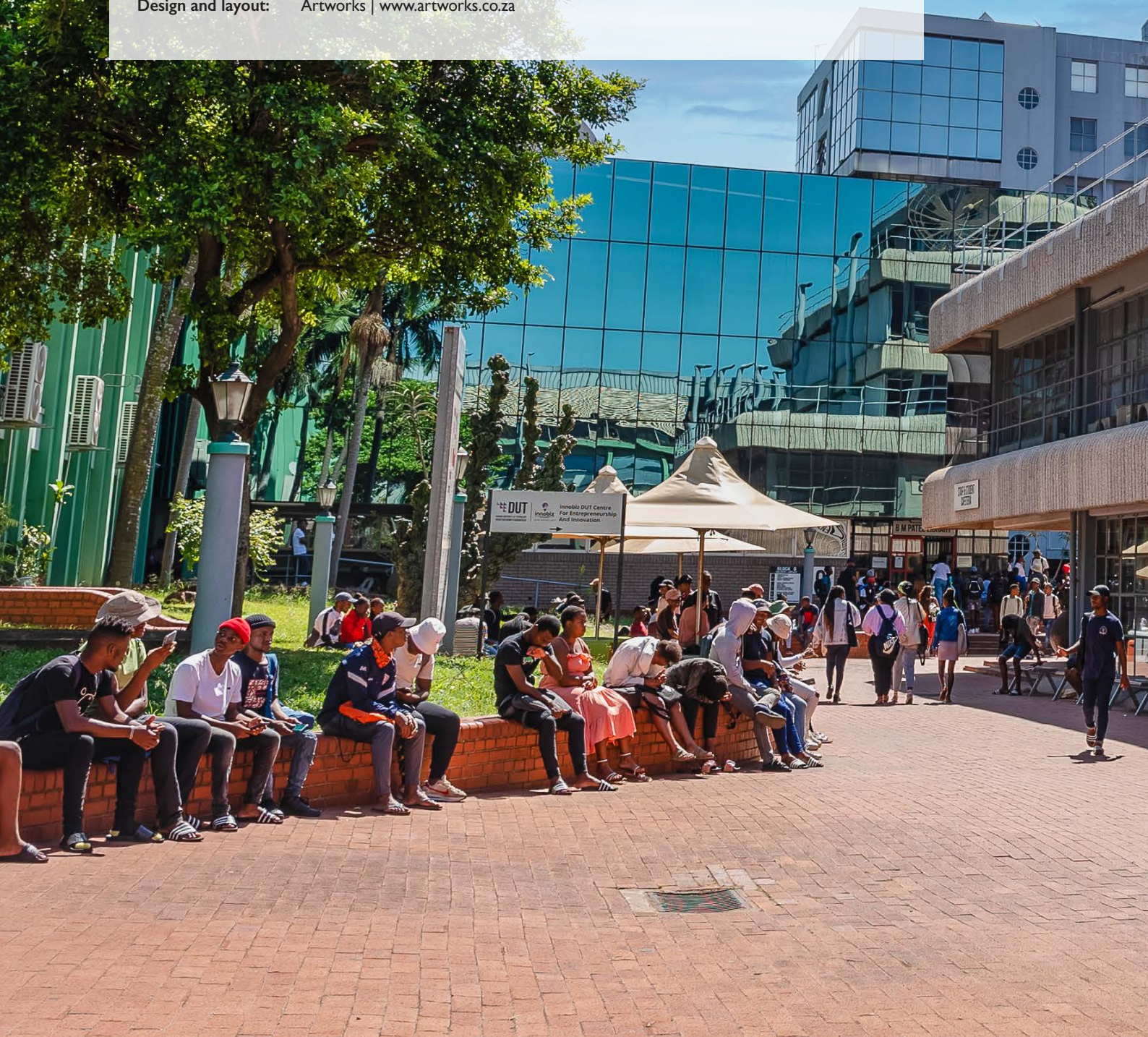
Executive Owner: Prof Fulufhelo Nemavhola - DVC RIE

Lead Reviewer: Dr Clement Moreku
Dean of Students
Student Services

Contributions: Faculty of Accounting and Informatics | Faculty of Applied Sciences | Faculty of Arts and Design | Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment | Faculty of Health Sciences | Faculty of Management Sciences | Research and Post-graduate Support Directorate | Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology (IWWT) | Confucius Institute (CI) | International Education and Partnerships (IEP) Directorate | Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) | innobiz | Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubator (CSERI) | Cooperative Education | Advancement and Alumni Relations (AAR) | Corporate Affairs | Centre for Continuing & Professional Education (CCPE) | Community Engagement

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