

# Tech way of teaching scores lecturer awards

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MANY old-school teachers struggle to prise their students' eyes away from glowing screens and onto the blackboard, but "digital immigrant" Roshnee Sunder has mastered the use of new media by turning the screens into a learning tool.

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Radiography lecturer recently collected a third award for her progressive and effective approach to teaching.

Last month, she received a DUT Vice Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence at the university's autumn graduation.

She added it to the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) National Excellence in Teaching and Learning accolade she received in November, as well as a DUT Faculty of Health Science Award for Teaching Excellence award.

Sunder, 47, has been teaching for 12 years. She credits her philosophy that students should be "active learners" as inspiration for her successful methods.

"The important thing is making students responsible for their learning. What's different is that I don't just stand in front and do the talk-and-walk method with a chalkboard."

She uses a mixture of learning methods to help students individually learn in the style that works best for them. She teaches using the internet academic platform Blackboard, creates podcasts and videos for her students, and encourages them to engage with technology by coming up with innovative assessment methods — such as encouraging students to create video assignments.



**DIGITAL IMMIGRANT:** Roshnee Sunder believes visual stimulation is the best form of immersion

Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

"Today's students are visually stimulated in their everyday lives. One needs to connect with them on that level."

She believes "teaching is a calling, not a job", one which she found her way to via the scenic route. "Interestingly, I always wanted to be a teacher, but my dad didn't want me to teach. So I ended up doing a degree in radiography."

She began teaching after

## She engages with her students using new media

completing a Bachelor of Technology degree in 2000 at the former Technikon Natal (now the Durban University of Technology).

Sunder said she was inspired by several teachers at the various Durban schools she attended.

Having been born before the 1980s, the mother of two laughs off the description "digital native" when describing her affinity for technology.

"According to the literature, I'm actually a digital immigrant.

"I've developed such a love for technology and what you can do

with it. It opens up whole worlds."

Sunder thanked fellow lecturer Penny Orton for nominating her for the national award. She said the experience made her optimistic about the potential for excellence in higher education in South Africa.

"You think you're the only person doing things but realise there's a lot of excellent teaching going on around you."