

Autumn Graduation Ceremonies

Welcome

Vice-Chancellor Professor Muthwa

Virtual Event, 22 - 30 April 2021

Madame Chancellor, Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi

Chairperson of Council, Ambassador Nozipho January-Bardill

Members of Council

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Executive Deans of Faculties and the Dean of Students

Professors, academics

Student Leadership

Honorary Doctoral Recipients

And most importantly, our graduates, including those at the pinnacle of achievement, those receiving their doctorates, and all your family and friends who are joining us today in this virtual graduation

It is my privilege to welcome you to our 2021 autumn graduation season. Graduation is the ultimate celebration in the life of any university. As we share in our collective joy of each graduate receiving their qualification today, we

remain conscious that, as the global community, we have yet to defeat Covid 19. The pandemic has ravished communities. It has caused unimaginable grief and loss of life. The world economy is stagnant and families have suffered deep economic setbacks which will affect livelihoods for multiple years ahead. This, in turn, has had a significant knock-on effect on resources - both public and private - available to fund higher education.

Yet, despite the devastation wrought by the pandemic, we have also witnessed the dawn of bold, imaginative and break-through innovations. Most profoundly, the university had to make an immediate transition to learning and teaching via online and blended platforms. This has made the past academic year unique and unprecedented. Each and every graduate receiving a qualification today has risen to all these new and unfamiliar challenges in unimaginable ways - with agility, ingenuity, and tenacity. And so the successful completion of studies, by each graduating student represents a true triumph of what is possible. For this, we salute you, as we remember the words of our namesake, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, who stated that *"it always seems impossible until it's done"*.

As graduates of Nelson Mandela University, you have a responsibility to take forward Madiba's legacy. Nelson Mandela, the figure, remains a commanding, and unparalleled presence of the 20th century. As a person, he dedicated all his life to creating a more equal and just society and ensuring a better life for all. He had a deep compassion for humanity and its interconnectedness.

He lived out his conviction that none of us can be truly free unless we commit to the advancement of universal freedoms and rights, and dedicate ourselves to fostering an appreciation for the dignity of all human beings. He worked tirelessly to unite this country, our continent and the world behind the higher ideals of justice and reconciliation.

And, of course, he placed huge importance on education as a force for good, and a weapon to Change the World.

Our society remains profoundly unequal with high levels of poverty and unemployment, as well as various forms of exclusion. Responding to the complex challenges of our times, calls for deep commitment to the service of humanity, and a dedication to a cause that is larger than each one of us. It is my hope that as graduates of Nelson Mandela university, inspired by our ambitious vision and mission, and cognisant of our noble values, you will set out to extend the impact of your contribution in ways that contribute to a world that is better than the one we live in.

We hope that the time you have spent at Nelson Mandela University has been life changing, and that you have gained a holistic perspective of the world, which will equip you to use your talents in the service of society.

We are proud that this year we welcome the first cohort of medical students to the country's 10th medical school, here at Mandela University.

It is also my pleasure to use this occasion to share with our stakeholders, and you, our graduandi of 2021, that University Council recently approved Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2030 - a strategic roadmap that will set out to guide our work and scholarly contribution in the next 10 years. I invite you to walk this path with us, through your direct and indirect involvement, as we bring to life our promise to be the University in service of society.

On this important occasion of your graduation, we salute all the family members, loved ones and friends for the role you have played in supporting and enabling our graduates to reach this remarkable milestone in their life journey.

I also pay a special tribute to our dedicated academic and professional support staff who have worked alongside our graduates to ensure that despite these difficult times, they succeed and excel.

In this autumn graduation season, we are proud to be awarding in the region of 5000 qualifications, across the spectrum from undergraduate to doctoral degree. We are also delighted to be awarding three honorary doctorates in recognition of outstanding individuals who have made sterling and exceptional contributions to society. It is our humble honour and privilege to welcome our honorary doctorate recipients to the Nelson Mandela University family. I do hope that your association with this institution and its iconic namesake will be a rewarding one for you, as it is a proud one for us.

Again, I welcome all of you to this autumn graduation ceremony of 2021

Congratulations to our graduates. Halala!