

The past, present and future of design excellence in South Africa

 By [Meagan Duckitt](#)

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The Future Excellence Design Institute South Africa (Fedisa) is the top private fashion school in South Africa. Meagan Duckitt chats to founder and CEO, Allen Leroux, regarding the courses offered, the advantages of studying at Fedisa as well as its exciting future endeavours.



■ ***When was Fedisa established?***

Fedisa was established in January 2005 and accreditation took place a year before. We started that year with only 12 students and now have an average of 250 students annually.

■ ***What was your vision behind this exceptional establishment?***

Nelson Mandela said that 'education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.' I saw a gap in the marketplace for a fashion institution providing students with a quality education, which would change their lives.

In our unrelenting pursuit for excellence, we expose our students to a centre of excellence and highly-skilled staff who are passionate about making a difference.

■ ***Fedisa established a reputation for being the number one choice for aspiring designers. Why?***

Anyone serious about their career and future wants the best education and wants to study at the best institution. This is the reason why Harvard is the first choice for a law degree and Fedisa is the first choice for a fashion qualification.

Your academic years are more than just the qualification, you build a professional network and a good school also exposes you to opportunities to engage with the industry and showcase your work before graduating.

■ ***What type of courses do you offer?***

We positioned Fedisa to offer a qualification to the broadest spectrum of potential fashion students. The BA degree in fashion remains the flagship qualification, which is devised for the creative, business-minded person who wants to create

the fashion product.

The second course is the diploma in fashion merchandising, marketing and media (this is not a degree) and is specially developed for the retail-minded person. These students do not create fashion products but focus on the elements that sell the fashion product. Like a diploma, this qualification offers broadened access to Fedisa for those students that may not have matriculated with a matric exemption, but remain confident of a career in fashion.

The third course is a BA Honours in fashion. This postgraduate degree is for the strategists and managers. It is quite interesting that often the students who elect to complete this degree have not completed an undergraduate in fashion, but may have degrees - which range from branding to film and even analysis from various institutions.

■ ***For any educational institute, it is extremely important to not only be on par with your related fashion industry but also to provide your students with exposure to the industry as well. How do you achieve this?***



Fedisa founder and CEO, Allen Leroux

We are not an isolated entity and are intrinsically connected to the industry. We receive regular visits from industry experts and representatives and our campus interior is designed in such a manner that glass allows them insight to class activities and lectures.

We are an open space for the fashion industry.

As they have access and insight to our campus, in return, they provide our campus with support and assistance in the form of various collaborations, to provide them with a better-groomed student for possible employment.



■ ***Does studying at Fedisa increase a student's chance of employment after graduation?***

Yes, students are frequently earmarked by the industry during the final year of their studies, upon completion of their internships.

The industry is well aware of the level of quality a Fedisa student offers and thus strives to get the best graduate each year. To this end, Fedisa hosts various companies during the year to present their opportunities, right here on our campus. This

is called our 'industry month'.

■ **Who is your student?**

We have a diverse range of students, at one point we had students from 35 countries outside of South Africa and they range from Brazil, China, Belgium, Italy, just to name a few. We have a 50/50 racial ratio with a zero-discrimination policy. We welcome and respect every religion, sexual orientation as well as differently-abled students.

■ **What are some of your alumni achievements?**

- Sarah Emma Mather-Brown – completed her BA degree and Honours with us. Sarah is now the head designer and assistant global brand manager for From St Xavier in Sydney, Australia.
- Carolyn Andrews was involved in the costume design for 2017 *Beauty & the Beast* feature film.
- Olga Mare-Moller (Hougaard) studied at Fedisa, worked here as a lecturer and then started her own label, Olga Mare. She recently dressed former Miss SA and Miss World Rolene Strauss for the Miss SA 2019 awards.
- Tatum Billson is the founder and managing director of popular baby brand, Nula Baby.
- Thalia Strates produces luxury distinct leather bags, with a local and international footprint, showcased in Paris.
- Temitope Williams, founder of a fashion school in Lagos, Nigeria called Martwayne
- Charlotte Francina became prominent for her bridalwear/formalwear across South Africa.
- Michaela Katzeff launched a label catering to modest dressing called Eishes.
- Esmare Carstens works for Budism Couture, which produces premium couture pieces with mostly international clients.
- Liz Naude Smit now heads up the trend division of the entire Pepkor Group in SA.
- Natasha Holland is the co-founder of Raela in Sydney, Australia.
- Kayla-Christal Pretorius is a fashion and trend forecaster with BDA London.
- Hamzeh Alfarahneh is the founder of Not Just a Comb. Alfaraneh created a limited edition range with Puma.

■ ***You are the biggest private institution in the Western Cape and it is clear that the numbers do not lie – at one point you had a first-year intake of over 120 students, compared to other private institutes whose overall intakes are less than that. It is amazing! And over and above your obvious success, you are now opening a new campus in Sandton, Johannesburg?***

Yes, we are continually striving for excellence.

Our Johannesburg campus is under construction and set to open in January 2020 and we will emulate our brand ethos in the Johannesburg campus as well.

■ **Any up-and-coming events?**

Our Fedisa Fashion Flash event on 12 September and our annual Graduate Collection Show on the 16 November at the Cape Town campus as well.

Our Johannesburg campus has an open day in the form of a site visit and information session on 5 October, so anyone interested in a fashion career is welcome to attend.

We are excited to see what the future holds for this phenomenal fashion college.

If you would like to connect with Fedisa visit the website at www.fedisa.co.za or the Facebook page – [@FEDISA](https://www.facebook.com/FEDISA) or IG [@fedisa_fashion_school](https://www.instagram.com/fedisa_fashion_school).

ABOUT MEAGAN DUCKITT

Meagan is a fashion designer, stylist, writer and public speaker. She owns a small clothing business called Calista Clothing and enjoys using her knowledge to empower women.
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