

UCT Online High School appoints new chief academic officer, Banele Lukhele

Banele Lukhele has been appointed as UCT Online High School's executive head of school and chief academic officer with effect from 1 December. As a result of both the size and modality, the organisational structure of the school is very different from a traditional school, and requires a broad set of departments and skills (such as learning design, technical support, data analytics etc) which regular schools don't require.



Banele Lukhele - UCT Online High School's executive head of school and chief academic officer

These differences also include the role of the principal, which in the case of UCT Online High School, must play an important oversight and governance role that is predominantly externally-focused, with a significant amount of relationships with the broader University, government, examination bodies, corporate companies and philanthropy. UCT Online High School is one school with multiple offerings, and each of these offerings has a head of school who operates more like a traditional school principal.

With this in mind, Lukhele will take over from Yandiswa Xhakaza who, after careful consideration, has taken the decision to step down from the role of director and principal of UCT Online High School. Xhakaza leaves UCT Online High School in pursuit of a more hands-on and operational role for her next career chapter.

Lukhele is joined by Siphon Mpisane as head of school for the CAPS curriculum and Tessa Venter as head of school for International curricula. Together, Lukhele, Mpisane and Venter lead a team of subject specialists, learning facilitators and support coaches.

Lukhele is an experienced and distinguished teacher with an Honours degree in Music, majoring in composition, from the University of the Witwatersrand, a Diploma in Sound Engineering and a Masters in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment from Walden University in the United States, which she earned by studying online.



#BehindtheBrandManager: Yazeed Osman, CMO at Valenture Institute and UCT Online High School

Karabo Ledwaba 18 Aug 2022



As director of faculty at UCT Online High School, Lukhele has played a pivotal role in onboarding the school's team of teaching and learning specialists. She has had a central role in designing and implementing the comprehensive suite of enhancements that are being implemented ahead of the 2023 school year.

In reflecting on her new role, Lukhele says: "This is an exciting next step for me, as being a part of UCT Online High School has been pivotal in my growth as an innovative educator. My first priorities in this role will be, firstly, reinforcing the application of data-driven teaching and learning through initiatives such as training and collaborative reflection; and secondly, driving community awareness. Many people may shy away from online learning because they do not fully understand this. I would like to spend time driving awareness of the work that we do and how it can make a positive impact in learners' lives."

As chief academic officer and UCT Online High School's executive head of school, Lukhele is a member of Valenture Institute's Executive Committee, reporting directly to the chief operations officer, with a dotted line to Valenture Institute's CEO and the University of Cape Town's Vice Chancellor. She is the strategic lead for academics, and the point of authority on teaching and learning policy and practices within the school. As executive head of school, she is a key member of UCT Online High School's Oversight Committee, which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town.

2023 will be an exciting year for UCT Online High School, which will be welcoming its first National Senior Certificate Grade 12 class, inaugurating its Adult Matric offering and launching its Cambridge International curriculum.

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