

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Absa Fellowship Programme



Your story matters



1. Why does Absa offer a Fellowship Programme?

We have a vested, long-term interest in supporting development in Africa. As a Financial Services Provider, we play an integral role in the economic life of individuals, businesses and nations through helping to create, grow and protect wealth, while playing a shaping role in Africa's growth and sustainability. Our strategic thinking has a purposeful intent: to create intergenerational value by contributing meaningfully to the societies in which we operate. As an active force for good in everything we do, education and skills development is one of our signature social actions.

Our priority is to put the basic building blocks in place to ensure that young African entrepreneurial leaders can reimagine their futures and empower their tomorrow. Through the Absa Fellowship Programme, they will emerge as private and public sector leaders or as entrepreneurs or in their chosen industries, being able to actively shape their businesses, societies, promote sustainability and build a better world for future generations.

2. What does the Absa Fellowship Programme offer?

The future of our continent lies in the hands of young, brave and passionate entrepreneurial leaders who are ready to rise. The Absa Fellowship Programme was therefore designed to shape the future generation of authentic, accountable, entrepreneurial and ethical leaders that will reimagine, reframe and reshape society.

To get there, they need more than education. They also require critical work, life, business, entrepreneurial and thinking skills to help them adapt to this rapidly changing world as future citizen, future employee and business owner. Our education and skills development initiatives are therefore focused on preparing young people for the workplace of the future either as owner or employee.

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and other emerging technologies are happening in ever-shorter cycles, changing the very nature of the jobs that need to be done, both as an employee of an organisation or as a business owner and the skills needed. The Absa Fellowship Programme therefore focuses on supporting students studying towards an undergraduate degree in science, technology, engineering, creative arts, humanities, mathematics, commerce and digital design/data, which are all considered critical skills for the growth of an entrepreneurial and digital economy.

The Absa Fellowship offers a full merit programme, recognising the unique entrepreneurial leadership capabilities and competencies exhibited by the successful candidates. In addition to financial support toward their academic studies, Absa Fellows benefit from exposure to a specially curated Entrepreneurial Leadership Development Programme, which includes emotional wellness support and academic tutoring.

3. What are the objectives of the Absa Fellowship Programme?

The Absa Fellowship Programme aims to develop and equip the Absa Fellow with the critical competency skillset that future entrepreneurial leaders will require to achieve an institutional and transformational impact, both in business, communities, countries and on the African continent.

The overall Entrepreneurial Leadership Development Programme will ensure that, on completion, the Absa Fellow will not only have an academic degree, but also a pivotal network of peers. They will have built an understanding of both their entrepreneurial mindset and intent as well as their authentic selves, developed a deep sense of community citizenship and their own creativity, as well as the capacity to effect the changes that they desire, with an understanding of the African context and the possibilities therein.

Our programme is therefore curated to develop the following skillset over the duration of their studies:

- Innovation, system thinking, change and adaptability
- An Afrocentric global mindset
- A project and digital mindset
- Multi-sectoral communication and collaborative orientation
- Commercial acumen
- Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills
- Personal mastery, future-focus and people development skills
- An environmental consciousness.

4. What are the minimum criteria for the Absa Fellowship Programme?

- The applicant must be between the ages of 18 and 25 years.
- The applicant must have attained a minimum average of 65% in grade 12 (or equivalent qualifications from a TVET college/A-levels/Sixth form).
- Provisional or final acceptance from one of the following public universities in South Africa:

University of Johannesburg	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
University of the Witwatersrand	University of Zululand	University of Fort Hare
Vaal University of Technology	Mangosuthu University of Technology	Rhodes University
University of Pretoria	Durban University of Technology	Walter Sisulu University
Tshwane University of Technology	University of Cape Town	University of the Free State
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	University of the Western Cape	Central University of Technology
University of Limpopo	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Sol Plaatje University
University of Venda	Stellenbosch University	North-West University
University of Mpumalanga	University of South Africa	

- The applicant must be studying towards one of the undergraduate degrees preselected by Absa (see the list in table A below).
- A fully completed application form supported by all the required documents.
- Completed online psychometric assessments facilitated by our external service provider.

- Participation in a presentation and short video preparation on a topic provided to the candidate that will be evaluated and scored by a panel of Absa's Senior Management.

Additional information that will be required:

- Confirmation of combined household income
- Confirmation of citizenship
- Disability, if applicable, supported by the appropriate medical proof/certificate
- Race (only applicable to South African citizens)
- Gender
- ID to confirm age (applicant needs to be between the ages of 18 and 25 years to apply)
- Confirmation of any existing student medical or private medical aid (South African citizens only).

In the case of international students from Mauritius, Seychelles, Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda or Ghana, the following additional information will be required:

- Proof of student visa or student visa application confirmation
- International student medical aid cover
- Matriculation board qualification verification
- Offer or acceptance letter from the applicable university.

5. What does the Absa Fellowship Programme cover?

The programme provides funding to students to study on a full-time basis at the public universities in South Africa mentioned in point 4 above.

The Absa Fellowship covers the academic and leadership programme cost. The academic cost will include full tuition, meals, university/university-approved accommodation, laptop, books, education equipment, monthly data and stipend as well as student medical aid cover where required. The leadership programme cost will include online masterclasses, assessments, learner modules and guides, access to emotional wellness check-in sessions, academic tutoring as well as mentoring by Absa's leadership and other industry experts.

Once awarded:

- A monthly stipend will be paid into the Absa Fellow's Absa Transactional Account.
- An allowance for annual textbooks, educational equipment and stationery will be paid into the Absa Fellow's Absa Transactional Account.
- A voucher for a laptop will be issued. If a laptop is purchased by the Fellow, a refund to the maximum amount allocated under the Fellowship Programme in year 1 will be given.
- The university tuition, accommodation and meal quota fees will be paid directly to the university.
- In the case of private (university-approved) accommodation (including utilities), the landlord will be paid directly every month on submission of the contract and invoice from the landlord, within the capped amount.
- Where prepaid water and/or electricity apply, the Absa Fellow will be refunded monthly for the purchase thereof (subsequent to submitting proof of purchase) within the capped amount.
- A monthly Wi-Fi allowance will be paid, if included in the rent agreement with the landlord or provided by the landlord's service provider.
- Where meals are not included in the contract with the landlord, for university accommodation or for students staying with their parents, a monthly meal allowance will be paid into the Absa Transactional Account together with the stipend.
- Monthly (or annually upfront) medical aid contribution for Absa Fellows on a student medical aid (such as Momentum or MediHelp's Student Medical Aid) – only applicable if the medical aid is a student medical aid and in the Absa Fellow's name.
- Free access to the Lyra Emotional Wellness Coaching Support Programme.
- For international students from previously listed countries, the following will be refunded:
 - o One return air ticket cost annually
 - o Student visa application cost

- o Annual prepaid international student medical aid cost.

6. For which degrees does the Absa Fellowship Programme provide funding?

The programme only covers preselected undergraduate degrees at NQF level 7 from the public universities in South Africa (listed under point 4) in the study fields of science, technology, engineering, art (creative and fine arts), mathematics, humanities (social sciences), commerce and digital design/data.

Studies towards any other undergraduate degrees from public universities, private higher education institutions (universities) as well as TVET colleges, are excluded from this programme.

The funding of postgraduate studies at NQF level 8 will be communicated at the time of the Absa Fellow graduating.

7. What does the Entrepreneurial Leadership Development Programme entail?

Fellowship recipients must participate in the compulsory entrepreneurial leadership development and related support programmes implemented as part of the programme.

What the Absa Fellow can expect from this programme, which aims at developing future African leaders to co-sense and co-create an emerging future filled with possibilities:

- A defined personal and entrepreneurial leadership vision and the proactive ability to create value for themselves and others.
- A deep sense of how to serve the communities in which they live and work.
- Broader insights into and a new perspective of the African context.
- An optimistic ability to be future-focused and think more creatively about solutions to African challenges through responsiveness and the ability to predict African challenges and the possibilities they pose.
- The capacity to develop and contribute to a network of high-performing, young individuals.
- Developing a multi-level view of how communities are an interconnected system.
- Understanding at a global, regional and country level where we come from, our current context and how this informs our future views.
- Learning and developing a critical mind- and skillset that is future-focused and drives intellectual, entrepreneurial, institutional and social transformation.
- Becoming aspirant and inspirational and evoking a feeling of prestige catalysed by authentic ambassadorship.
- Being equipped to drive exponential impact for individuals, communities, countries and ultimately the continent.
- The ability to apply entrepreneurial thinking in the workplace, and to set up and run their own business.

In addition, the Absa Fellow will have access to emotional wellness check-in sessions, academic tutoring and peer-to-peer programme mentoring.

Academic tutoring

In peer academic tutoring, individuals from similar academic field networks assist each other in their learning from one another's knowledge, abilities and skills in a particular subject.

This method will assist in meeting both multifaceted social and study needs and aims to prevent potential academic struggles and increase overall academic performance by laying a solid foundation for their studies.

Academic tutoring will be supported by workshops with a specific focus on time management, exam preparation and understanding how to memorise information. The workshops will be followed up with revision sessions to ensure that they have grasped the concepts and to engage with their peers by sharing best practices.

Wellness peer-to-peer mentoring

The wellness support mentoring sessions will give candidates access to someone who can give them some insights into what they experienced when they first got to campus, and they can assist and guide them through the initial phases of settling into student life.

The wellness support also aims at enhancing self-esteem and self-efficacy as well as improving life skills, coping strategies and problem-solving skills.

8. How is the Fellowship governed/managed?

The Absa Fellowship Forum provides guidance, oversight and governance of the Absa Fellowship Programme and is a cross-functional committee made up of senior Absa Management Representatives across Absa Business Units. This helps to ensure that the execution of Absa Fellowship Programme-related decisions made by the committee are fair, transparent and unbiased.

The Absa Corporate Citizenship team and Absa Fellowship Forum are responsible for:

- Developing the Absa Fellowship application process up to the contracting stage;
- Overseeing the Fellowship criteria;
- Overseeing the adjudication/selection process and its governing principles;
- Final recipient selection in line with the adjudication/selection process;
- Generally overseeing the Absa Fellowship Programme and relevant governing decisions, such as decisions related to the termination or continuation of the Fellowship in line with progress reports submitted for each successful recipient at the end of every semester, decisions around appeals and any changes to the Fellowship criteria;
- Developing the Absa Fellowship Entrepreneurial Leadership Programme and managing the implementation thereof; and
- Acquiring service providers required to assist in delivering the Fellowship Programme.

9. How are the Absa Fellowships awarded?

Absa Fellows will be recruited based on academic merit, field of study, assessed entrepreneurial skills and competency and not on personal bias or prejudice. They will be given a fair chance to contribute and achieve their potential over the duration of their undergraduate studies.

The successful candidates for the Fellowship will be selected from a shortlist compiled using the minimum criteria required, including the final score from online entrepreneurial leadership (mindset, intent and leadership characteristic) psychometric assessments and panel interviews (presentation) as guidelines.

Once the online applications are closed, applicants meeting the minimum criteria (phase 1) are invited to participate in an online entrepreneurial leadership (mindset, intent, leadership characteristic) psychometric assessment (phase 2).

Students will be shortlisted (phase 3) according to the minimum criteria and entrepreneurial leadership psychometric assessment score and submitted to the Fellowship Forum for candidate shortlisting to proceed to a presentation/interview evaluation by a panel consisting of Senior Managers at Absa as well as senior Fellows currently in the Absa Fellowship Programme (phase 4).

The shortlisted candidates are invited to prepare a presentation (including a short video) on a topic provided and submit it for evaluation by a panel appointed by the Fellowship Forum.

The panel will score the presentation and video and the score (phase 5) will be added to the score from phase 2 submitted to the Fellowship Forum for the final selection of provisionally qualified recipients (phase 6).

These recipients will undergo a social media background check (phase 7) before a provisional offer letter for acceptance or decline will be forwarded (phase 8).

Only 50 students will be selected for the Absa Fellowship Programme in 2025.

On receipt of the provisional offer, the candidate will be required to submit the following documents to ensure a seamless contracting and subsequent disbursement of funds process (phase 9 or the final phase):

- Final proof of acceptance/registration for the relevant degree at the university indicated on the provisional offer letter.
- Final matric or equivalent level results with a minimum of 65%.
- Quotes or actual cost from the institution for tuition and accommodation (or a copy of the rental agreement with the landlord).
- Student visa, international student medical aid and return flights (where applicable).
- Proof of registration where available (proof of registration to be submitted before any disbursements will be made).

Once the Fellowship has been awarded, the Absa Fellowship Forum reserves the right to adjust or withdraw any amount that may be awarded if there is a breach of the agreement entered into with the Fellowship recipient, or material changes in the recipient's circumstances and eligibility. Material changes include but are not limited to changes in financial-need circumstances and institution of study and academic qualifications, among others.

10. What will the online leadership psychometric assessment entail?

As the Absa Fellowship Programme is aimed at developing future entrepreneurial leaders, the applicants will be assessed to determine inherent traits, characteristics and inclination towards leadership. The assessments will be divided into six categories, namely traits, adaptability, drive, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills and entrepreneurial suitability.

- **Traits:** The individual's preferences and behavioural patterns
- **Adaptability:** The individual's ability to respond to change and challenges
- **Drive:** The individual's motivation and desire for success
- **Problem-solving skills:** The individual's ability to think clearly to solve problems
- **Interpersonal skills:** The individual's ability to interact and collaborate with others
- **Entrepreneurial suitability:** The individual's propensity and inherent mindset towards entrepreneurship.

The assessments are done via the contracted service provider, Yenza. Applicants will be required to register (providing personal information for registration purposes) on the Yenza platform to access the assessments. The results from the assessments will only be shared with Absa for use in the shortlisting process.

Please note that the Yenza assessment results and shortlisting do not consider academic results.

Applicants can access their assessment reports for their own personal use from the Yenza platform, using the same user details with which the account was created.

Yenza does not share assessment results with any third parties, and to further understand how Yenza uses personal information, please view the Yenza privacy policy and terms of use by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.yenzacareers.com/terms> <https://www.yenzacareers.com/privacy>

Any engagement between the applicant and Yenza after the completion of the assessments for the Fellowship application process will not form part of any agreement that Absa has with Yenza and Absa will not be involved at any point. Yenza is not part of the application administration process and will therefore not be able to provide the applicant with the status of their application.

11. How will the presentation evaluation by the group panel work?

The candidate will upload their presentation and video to the box folder link provided.

The time allocated per presentation and the maximum number of PowerPoint slides will be communicated to the candidate, together with their topic, via email by Fundi, on the Absa Panel's behalf.

The candidate will have two days to research, prepare and submit the presentation and video.

A minimum of two panel members will evaluate the presentation and video using a rubric, to ensure alignment across all panel members' evaluations.

12. What is the reason for Absa's values and social media screening?

As a corporate citizen both in South Africa and on the continent, Absa is required to conduct business in an ethical and responsible manner. Acting in an ethical and responsible manner also requires the Group to be vigilant and guarded when dealing with groups or individuals (clients, regulators, governments, business partners, service providers, employees, competitors and communities) as their actions, behaviour or ways of doing business can do harm or carry risk for our brand. Absa's values and behaviours represent the set of standards that governs the actions of every individual who works for the organisation in our dealings with external parties.

We act fairly, ethically, openly and abide by higher standards than those set by the laws and regulations that apply to our business.

We:

- Act with integrity, ethically, with due skill, care and diligence;
- Are open and co-operative with regulators;
- **Treat customers and clients fairly:**
We ensure that we respect and protect all personal information that we hold and abide by privacy laws and regulations that set out requirements for handling personal information;
- **Observe proper standards of market conduct:**
We are committed to addressing our environmental impacts and comply with all applicable environmental legislation in the countries in which we operate and adhere to environmental management standard and operating procedures;
- **Respect one another professionally and each other's diversity:**
 - We treat colleagues and clients as they would expect to be treated themselves, and to respect, understand and benefit from others' views and opinions;
 - We work in an environment that encourages dignity and respect, and which is free from any form of favouritism, victimisation, harassment, bullying and discrimination;
- **Keep our communities in mind in day-to-day business:**
Absa recognises that we have clear responsibilities to support governments and civil society organisations in respecting and upholding human rights principles wherever we operate.

As part of the Absa Fellowship Programme application process, Absa will be performing candidate screening and background checks, and such screening may include social media screening (where your settings on such social media are set to public) and screening relating to any information about you we may obtain from publicly available sources, such as search engine results.

13. Continuation of the Fellowship

Continuation of the Absa Fellowship Programme for a subsequent year will be considered based on a review of a minimum of 80% attendance and participation in the Leadership Programme workshops and interventions, academic performance of at least 55%, conduct at the end of the current academic year as well as other eligibility requirements.

Fellows who have less than an 80% attendance of leadership masterclasses, completion of Leadership Programme eLearning and participation in Emotional Wellness and Academic Tutoring interventions, but pass their full academic year, will forfeit their place in the programme.

Absa Fellows who achieve their 80% attendance of leadership masterclasses, completion of Leadership Programme eLearning and participation in Emotional Wellness and Academic Tutoring interventions, but fail their full academic year (achieve less than 50%, despite the university allowing continuation of studies), will forfeit their place in the programme.

Recipients of the Fellowship are entitled to receive funding for one undergraduate degree. Individuals who change their course of study or fail any full academic year that will cause the student to not complete their degree in the standard required time, will forfeit/lose any further/subsequent funding from the Fellowship Programme.

If a recipient of the Fellowship fails a subject and it does not result in the student not being able to complete their degree in the standard required time, they will be liable to pay the cost of the repeat of the subject from their own pocket, but they will not forfeit/lose any further/subsequent funding from the Absa Fellowship Programme.

Any transfer to an extended degree programme or the extension of standard required time must be referred to the Education Committee for a decision. This request is to be supported by recommendation from the degree faculty.

Where there are medical or other personal reasons, such as the death of a parent or sibling, that causes the student to exit their studies during the academic year, it must be referred to the Education Committee for a decision.

14. Will the funding under the Absa Fellowship Programme need to be paid back?

No, the funding under the Absa Fellowship Programme does not need to be paid back once the recipient has successfully completed their studies, provided that there are no breaches of contract.

15. Who can apply for the Fellowship?

Only permanent citizens from the following countries who will study towards an undergraduate degree listed under table A below at one of the public South African universities listed under Minimum criteria for the Absa Fellowship Programme, can apply:

Seychelles	South Africa
Mauritius	Tanzania
Botswana	Kenya
Zambia	Uganda
Mozambique	Ghana

16. General application checklist

- Applicants need to apply online.
- Applicants need to ensure that the application form is filled out correctly, in full and in English.
- All necessary documents are to be uploaded. You will not be able to complete the application process if mandatory documents are not uploaded.

Applications with incomplete information and missing documents will not be considered and will be disqualified from the application process.

Minimum documents required to complete the application

For matriculants:

- Identity document
- Provisional/Final acceptance from the university for undergraduate degree studies
- Results for grade 12/NQF level 4 or equivalent level if not schooled in South Africa
- Disability certificate (if applicable)
- Student visa/Student visa application confirmation
- Student medical aid cover (international students only)
- School certificate verification by the South African Matriculation Board.

For current tertiary students (this only applies to the first undergraduate degree):

- Identity document
- Provisional/Final acceptance for new course registration as a first-year student
- Exam results of preceding semester
- Disability certificate (if any).

Minimum documents required to complete contracting for successful matriculant and/or current tertiary student applicants:

- Signed acceptance of the written offer made by Absa
- Identity document
- Final acceptance from the university for undergraduate degree studies/course change.

**Please note that the terms and conditions published and consented to during the application process will subsist over the tenure of the Absa Fellowship Programme and your participation therein.*

Table A

Guidelines for study fields in social sciences (humanities), science, technology, engineering, creative arts, mathematics and digital design/data: Academic year 2025

Social sciences (humanities)	Science	Technology	Engineering	Creative arts	Mathematics	Digital design/data	Commerce
<p>Any BA degree. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing Arts • Music • Drama • Social Work • Law • Languages • Political Sciences • Arts and Visual Arts • Philosophy • Politics • Education • Theatre and Performance • Languages • Social Dynamics • Audiology • Speech Language 	<p>Any BSc degree. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Bioinformatics • Agriculture • Biochemistry • Biology • Genetics • Astronomy and Astrophysics • Chemistry • Physics • Chemistry with Chemical Engineering • Applied Chemistry • Oceanography • Astrophysics • Marine Biology • Astrophysics • Genetics • Marine Biology • Ocean and Atmosphere Science • Molecular Biology • Chemical Biology • Earth Sciences • Food Science • Biochemistry and Cell Biology • Genetics and Developmental Biology • Astronomy and Astrophysics • Applied Physics and Engineering Mathematics • Geoinformatics • Meteorology • Molecular Biology and Biotechnology • Chemistry and Polymer Science • Chemistry and Chemical Technology • Applied Physics • Astronomy • Hydrology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Science • Information Technology • Computer Science and Informatics • Business Computing • Informatics • Information Systems • Computer Engineering • Information Engineering • Information Systems and Computer Science • Information and Knowledge Systems • Information Systems Management • Computer Science and Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuclear Science and Engineering • Aeronautical • Chemical • Civil • Electrical • Mechanical • Metallurgy and Materials • Mining • Chemical • Extraction Metallurgy • Mechatronic • Water and Environmental Engineering • Construction • Energy • Robotics • Sound Engineering • Physical Metallurgy • Industrial • Electronic • Metallurgical • Civil Engineering • Structural • Engineering and Civil Engineering Informatics • Water and Environmental Engineering • Construction • Engineering and Management • Electrical and Electronic Engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informatics • Energy • Robotics • Telecommunication • Electronic • Agricultural • Bioresources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Arts • Film and Television • Fine Arts • Media Studies • Theatre and Performance • Digital Arts • Visual Arts • Drama • Theatre and Performance • Drama and Performance • Visual Arts • Digital Arts • Film and Media Production • Fine Arts • Visual Studies • Drama and Film Studies • Drama and Theatre Studies • Fine Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actuarial Science • Computational and Applied Mathematics • Mathematical Sciences • Mathematics of Finance • Econometrics • Mathematics • Applied Mathematics • Pure Mathematics • Statistics • Applied Mathematics • Applied Statistics • Mathematical Statistics • Statistics and Data Science • Actuarial and Financial Mathematics • Mathematical Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture • Urban, Regional and Development Planning • Architecture • Graphic Design • Multimedia (Digital) Design • Industrial Design • Architecture • City and Regional • Urban Design • Media and Writing • Digital Media • Game design • Interior Architecture • Multimedia • Information Design • Visual Communication • Integrated Art and Design 	<p>Any commerce degree. Examples: BCom, etc.</p>