

UniFiji Watch



Issue No. 3

A publication by the University of Fiji's journalism students

June 2023

Rest assured this university is best quality

The University of Fiji this year became the first in the country to win accreditation from the internationally-recognised Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

"It is one of the greatest achievements that the University has achieved," said Deepak Lal, Director Quality Assurance.

The process started last year and the University was able to satisfy nine of the 10 ESG criteria initially, while the last of the criteria was met satisfactorily this year.

"My experience in quality assurance meant I knew how to develop policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

"There were certain SOPs that needed to be developed and we developed these in line with international requirements.

The SOPs helped meet all the ESG criteria.

The award itself is a UK-standard-based quality assurance and the process is an international review which uses 10 standards set out in the European Standards Guidelines (ESG).

"It is a mark of excellence which a lot of universities aspire to get," Mr Lal said. "Any organisation that goes for the QAA accreditation needs to have a policy for quality assurance."

He said the QAA sees that the institution or the organisation should ensure that its programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take active roles in creating the learning process.

"They call it students-centred learning, teaching and

By **UniFiji Watch**
reporters



Deepak Lal ... upholding standards

assessment," he said. "They look at the whole student admission, progression, recognition and certification process from the time a student is admitted at the university.

"If their Grade Point Average (GPA) falls below a certain limit then the academic advisers at the university go and talk to the students, talk about their performance and how they can further improve them.

"Recognition are the awards and the certification that the students get upon completing the programmes.

"The agency also looks at the competency of academics. In Fiji, we have the Fiji Higher Education Commission which ensures that the academic staff are themselves academically competent.

"The general rule is, for you to actually teach a particular programme, you need to have a qualification that is one step

higher than the qualification you are teaching. They also look at the way the institutes select, recruit and develop their staff which is a very comprehensive process," Mr Lal said.

The QAA also looks at the learning resources and the student support that the university provides, appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and resources.

"They also look at information management," Mr Lal said. "They check if the university has a system in place with which they can collect, analyse and use relevant information for effective management of programmes and other activities.

"They also assess public information from the institute website to see what information the university publishes about its activities. They assess how the university monitors and reviews programmes as, over time, programmes evolve due to new legislation and information."

The Cyclical External Quality Assurance is one of the most important policies the university has had to develop, Mr Lal said.

The university had to have an external quality assurance in line with the ESG.

"It is an evidence-based approach. When the evidence is given, the outcome is shown. It is a cyclical approach where the whole system has improved.

"Meeting the criteria is not easy unless and until you have a very sophisticated system and processes in place," Mr Lal said.



The University of Fiji's horticultural co-ordinator Tifare Paulo extracts the sweet liquid from honeycombs nurtured in hives on the Saweni campus.

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A busy year as university goes from strength to strength



I AM delighted to contribute to this edition of UniFiji Watch. When the Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) students launched their newspaper last year, with the kind editorial assistance of well-

known Fijian journalist and their lecturer, Vimal Madhavan, as an exercise in writing and editing, it was an exciting moment for the University. It meant that our JMS students could have practical experience in honing their craft and be immediately ready to work in newsrooms as soon as they graduated.

The milestones reached by the University since the last UniFiji Watch edition went to press will perhaps serve as the focus of some in-depth stories in UniFiji Watch.

Over the past six months the University has been able to undertake a number of activities in line with our Strategic Plan 2022-2026. In April we successfully hosted another graduation ceremony which was held at the Student Bure and showcased the University of Fiji Choir for the first time. A record number of students from all faculties and programmes were capped this year.

Our Art Gallery has been set up at Samabula Campus under the expert guidance of Fijian artist Mason James Lee, the University's Artist in Residence. The Gallery will be formally opened with an exhibition in mid-July.

We also reached a particularly special milestone in May – artesian water from our own borehole is now being used at Saweni Campus from the Wai-Jal Water for Life Project started in 2020. We should soon be able to supply water to the Saweni and Vuda communities in the dry season, or when there are water cuts, as part of our community responsibility.

Our University of Fiji Yummy Honey is now gaining much attention from consumers due to its organic focus. The University's staff will be selling Yummy Honey at Vuda Market initially and then at other markets in future.

The most important achievement of the University this year was our international accreditation badge awarded by the Quality Assurance Agency Global after a rigorous two-year review of the University.

The immediate future looks promising. We expect the Drua Voyage, launched in 2022, to begin in July. We are also on a campaign for the Circular Economy Policy to be implemented by the government and we will be working with consultants on modeling for Fiji to move the taxation emphasis to non-renewable resources. We remain committed to the partnership we have forged with our students at the University of Fiji.

I wish the JMS student journalists every success in their new UniFiji Watch edition.



Picture: Fiji Times

First and second-year journalism students on their visit to the Fiji Times offices in Lautoka

Four-fold rise in media student numbers

By Aliyah Kumar

THE journalism department has gone from strength to strength in the two years it has existed.

"There's no way that we are going to drop this programme", said Dr Kamala Naiker, the Head of the Department of Language, Literature and Communications.

The programme was set up following a request from the industry, and has seen massive progress since it began.

It started with four students last year, and now has 16 first-year students.

"Our student numbers have increased which is a good indication that the programme is going well," Dr Naiker said.

The university will continue to offer this programme because there is a lot of interest in the courses it is offering.

Another reason for the increase in students was that they could get funding through the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Services.

And news of the programme had also spread by word-of-mouth.

Some students had had financial difficulties, Dr Naiker said, and the university was willing to help students in whichever way they can.

The journalism department will soon have a newsroom and a space where they can produce their publications and radio programmes.

It will provide an area where they can store and use the equipment that is being acquired to provide the best opportunities for students.

The editing and recording facilities will give students new opportunit-

ies to develop their skills

Staff numbers have also grown, doubling from two to four this year. The university intends to get more staff as the programme progresses depending on the courses offered.

The second-year students have also taken on a mentoring role with the students just starting out.

Dr Naiker said she wanted the new students to work closely with their seniors.

The seniors have also accompanied the juniors to their trip to newsrooms in the west.

Shaniyah Khan, a second-year JMS student said she was looking forward to the new role.

Khan is also a newsroom journalist and presenter for VOX, the university's radio station, and has begun training some year-one students in radio work.

Record number of graduates

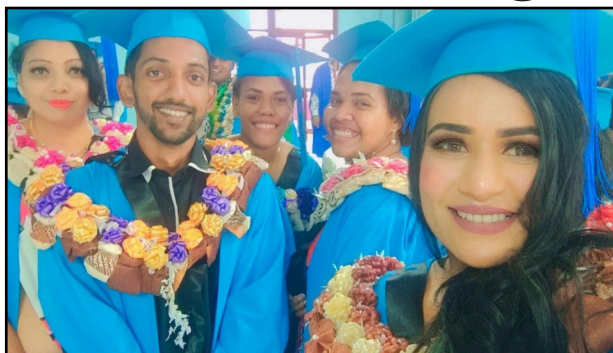
HARD work, determination and many sleepless nights finally paid off for the 316 students who proudly received their degrees on graduation day in April.

Pro-Chancellor Kamlesh Arya presented the degrees and diplomas to a record number of students at a ceremony at the university.

Twenty-eight students won medals for their work and Arishma Achal Chand and Alexander Tua Wise won the highly-coveted Vice-Chancellor's Award.

In the school of Business and Economics, the top students were Zahra Khan, Almaaz Faaizza and Kamal Lingam.

From the School of Science and Technology, the outstanding students were Zahra Khan, Shinal Kashmita



Picture: Avitesh Vikash Ram

School of Law students pose after getting their awards.

From left: Sherleen Kumar, Samit Narayan, Weka Ratudale, Reaapi Neioko and Christine Naicker

Singh, Arishma Achal Chand, Raanvee Raviksha Singh, Shamal Veera Sami, Asish Narayan Murti, Muni Prashneel Gounder and Monesh Sami

The outstanding students at the

School of Humanities and Arts were Dip Deepak Maharaj, Maureen Monita Devi, Sitara Devi Raj, Pritesh Chand, Sawastika Salini Dutt, Arteeka Mani and Sarojini Lata Raj

At the Justice Devendra Pathik School of Law, Isireli Raseisei, Shivneil Kumar Raj and Ashneel Shankar stood out.

And from the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the outstanding award went to Christopher Votuchikai.

Gold medals were awarded to Almaaz Faaizza of the School of Business and Economics,

Arishma Achal Chand of the School of Science and Technology, and Christopher Votuchikai (Umanand Prasad School of Medicine & Health Sciences).



Nourishing food – and it’s all our own work

By Zaliqa Ali

THERE is a corner of the university grounds that is slowly being transformed into a special garden.

This is the section of the grounds that will help realise the university’s plans to produce organic fruits and vegetables to use on site and to sell outside.

It is part of a health initiative to ensure students and staff have fresh fruits and vegetables.

Horticultural co-ordinator Tifare Paulo said that while it was still early days, they had already earned some cash from vegetables they have sold.

“Okra, bele and cucumbers are some of the vegetables planted which were sold,” he said.

And in the meantime, he said, they were improving the quality of the soil and are benefiting from a much better water supply than they had previously.

The plan is to have organic produce, so they need lots of compost, all of which they will try to produce on site. One of the things they will do is collect grass clippings from around the university instead of dumping or burning it.

This year they managed to produce four tons of compost from the 12 tons of clippings they collected, Mr Paulo said.

Producing their own compost meant they did not have to depend on chemical fertilisers.

Another problem they had when they started was the scarcity of water. But that also had now been solved with the sinking of a borehole that brings pure water from deep underground to irrigate the garden and other green projects at the Saweni site (*See report below*).

One problem that they have not yet managed to solve is that of the uninvited “guests” – both human and animal – visiting the gardens.

The area is not yet fenced off properly, Mr Paulo said, which led to goats and some people wandering and helping themselves.

“There is no control,” but once the area is fenced off, it will have better protection.



Fresh and appetising ... luscious produce, above and below, from the gardens of the university, and below left, tomato plants flourishing in the fine weather



Yummy Honey for sale.

A helping hand from the bees

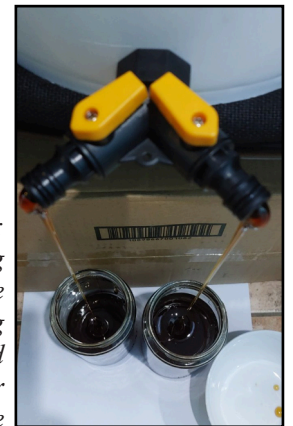
THE sweet smell of success hangs over the little area of the university where bees are doing what they do best – producing honey.

The hives have become a good little earner also as students and staff have been buying the honey, and there are plans to get the sweet, golden, syrup into local supermarkets.

The honey project is part of a little ecosystem of fruit and vegetable plants and the hives, with the bees pollinating the plants and taking pollen back as a food source.

Horticultural Co-ordinator Tifare Paulo said the project started with three hives. One did not do too well, so now there are only two in which the bees are busy.

The area had to be cleared, Mr Paulo said, and then tomatoes, cucumbers and pumpkins were planted along with



Topping up: Jars being filled before being labelled ready for sale

coconut and mango trees.

“They all require pollination.”

There are plans to plant other fruit trees such as pawpaws, citrus and soursop so they can improve the quality of the soil.

The first 300 pawpaw plants that were planted did not do too well because the soil is not the best.

“The soil needs to be improved before we can have good plants,” said Mr Paulo.

But despite the problems, the honey is very good quality. And without the bees “we will not have good quality of fruits and vegetables”, he added.

Staff and students have been snapping up the honey at a price of \$25.50 for half a litre (about 700 grams).

People can also buy 100g jars for \$3, so they can get a taste before deciding whether to spend more.

Mr Paulo said supermarkets had approached the university for supplies for their shops, and were discussing the matter with the Vice-Chancellor.

Water from deep down will help a dry area burst back into life

THE words “wai” and “jal” both mean “water” in the i-Taukei and Hindi languages respectively.

Both words have come together to provide the name for a project that will bring life to the dry soil above it.

The Wai-Jal Project aims to draw water from 100 feet underground to

By Zaliqa Ali

nourish and help the growth of organic fruits and vegetables in the university’s growing new garden.

It would give a boost to the university’s Gaia project which has had to be paused because of a lack of

water, said the university’s Horticultural Co-ordinator Tifare Paulo.

Water would also be provided to nearby communities, in times of shortages of the public supply, as part of the university’s commitment to the community of which it was a part.



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UniFiji Leisure Watch



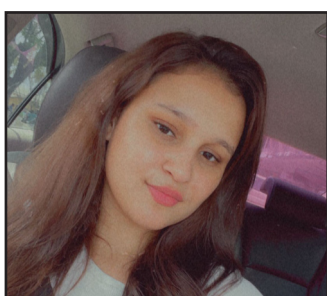
The University of Fiji
(An Entity of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji)

YOUR SAY – What is your favourite way of relaxing?



Kinisimere Nabose,
Foundation Science

I chose meditation as part of my relaxation because meditation allows us to observe our thoughts and emotions in a detached, non-judgmental way



Shayal Kumar,
Bachelor of Law (LLB)

I love watching movies and playing games on my phone, just because it makes me feel relaxed and reduces my stress level.



Christine Naicker
(Graduate Diploma in
Legal Practice)

I prefer to read or listen to music while having some wine, indoors or outdoors and that makes me feel relaxed.



Ashley Kumar,
(Bachelor of Nursing
Science)

I love drinking herbal tea or a warm cup of milk with honey in it just because it really helps me to calm down and also helps me to relax.



Hitnesh Naidu,
(Bachelor of Nursing
Science)

I listen to music in order to feel relaxed because listening to my favourite music has a calming effect on my mind and body.

Take some time out and give yourself a break

UNIVERSITY life is more than just study and research. Students and staff know they must give their minds the time and opportunities to relax and rebuild.

The university community itself is a vibrant and active one that encourages staff and students to relax and turn their focus away from the burdens of learning.

The School of Law, for example, organises regular get-togethers for students. The social gatherings help them relax and relieve their tension.

“We meet different types of people and share different ideas and views,” said law student Ranjana Pillay.

For the more active ones in the community there is a choice of netball, soccer, basketball, rugby and more. The university has excellent facilities, including full-size sports courts, fields, and a gym.

On most evenings

By Avitesh Vikash Ram

students can be found training and preparing for matches or tournaments.

And if you prefer a quieter life there’s a range of clubs and groups to satisfy your demands. There’s the chess club which has done well in national competitions, the Thespian Society for those wanting to try acting, and the Film Society who want to watch acting.

For people with opinions to shout about there’s the Mooting Club, Debating Club, or the Toastmasters. And if you’re still looking for something to get involved in you can choose from the Rucksack Club, Quiz Team, Gaia Garden Club, Age of Aquarius Band, University Choir, and Art and Craft Club.

And the university has its own online campus radio. Students and staff can tune in to Vox Populi to listen to the best music.



How we relax (clockwise from above): a chess match in the grounds of the university; Ranjana Pillay at a student get-together; law students get some social time; craft work on display



**Editorial
team**

This edition of UniFiji Watch was prepared and produced by a team led by Aliyah Kumar and supported

by Zalika Ali, Avitesh Ram, Katherine Naidu, and Tanisha Bi

Earlier editions of UniFiji Watch can be found at <https://www.unifiji.ac.fj/unifiji-watch-student-online-paper/>