vodacom
business

UNISA
Case Study

UNISA partners with Vodacom Business

to Enable Inclusive, Connected Digital Learning.

Overview

The University of South Africa (UNISA), Africa's largest open-distance learning institution, sought a partner to help modernise its digital learning environment and ensure consistent, affordable online access for its students and staff. In response, UNISA appointed Vodacom Business on a two-year contract to provide digital connectivity solutions designed to remove barriers to online learning and support long-term educational transformation.

This case study explores how Vodacom Business implemented future-ready digital solutions ensuring learning continuity, enhancing digital literacy, and empowering educators and students across the country.

The Challenge

UNISA serves a highly diverse student population distributed across South Africa, many of whom rely heavily on mobile connectivity to access course materials, submit assignments, and participate in virtual classes.

Key challenges included:

- High student data costs, which limited access to critical academic platforms.
- The need for zero-rated digital services to enable consistent, uninterrupted online learning.
- Administrative inefficiencies for lecturers preparing and delivering content.
- A long-term requirement to evolve from emergency digital learning (post-COVID) to a sustainable, future-ready education model.

UNISA required a partner capable of delivering reliable, scalable, cost-effective digital solutions, backed by proven expertise in large-scale educational enablement.

The Solution

Vodacom Business introduced a comprehensive suite of digital offerings designed to enhance both teaching and learning experiences.

1. Reverse Billed Data (RBD)

Vodacom Business implemented its Reverse Billed Data solution, allowing UNISA students and staff to access:

The UNISA website

Learning platforms

Applications

Digital content

all without using their personal data.

UNISA pays only for actual usage linked to its digital services, ensuring equitable access for students irrespective of their data or airtime balance.

Impact:

Removes financial barriers to online learning

Guarantees always-on access to essential academic resources

2. Connected Digital Education Platform

Developed in partnership with Microsoft South Africa, this platform provides:

Free access to Microsoft Office 365, including Teams and Office apps

Virtual collaboration tools for students and staff

Planning and automation software for lecturers

Digital tools that modernise lesson preparation and streamline admin tasks

Impact:

Improved teaching productivity

Higher-quality digital learning experiences

Strong uplift in digital literacy for students

To complement RBD and ensure no student was excluded, Vodacom Business enabled:

EduBundle: Free access to educational sites selected by UNISA

Vodacom Anytime Data Bundles: A subsidised 30-day bundle including

10GB Anytime Data

20GB Night Owl Data

Impact:

Affordable, flexible data options

Broader access to course-related resources outside the UNISA ecosystem

Results

The partnership delivered significant academic and operational value:

Enhanced Access & Inclusion

Students across South Africa can now access learning tools cost-free and reliably, levelling the digital playing field.

Future-Focused Digital Literacy

The platform equips students with digital competencies critical for participation in South Africa's and the global digital economy.

Improved Teaching Efficiency

Lecturers benefit from modernised content planning tools, reducing manual administrative workload and improving teaching quality.