South African-German Graduate School – SAGGS (Programmgruppe TNB, 2026-2029)

strengthens internationalisation, supports capacity building and creates a shared talent pool

1. Project Background: Why SAGGS Matters

South Africa faces a critical engineering talent gap, with less than 7% of postgraduate enrolments in engineering, while Germany struggles with a growing shortage of skilled workers. SAGGS directly bridges this gap, turning two decades of THENSA-DHIK cooperation into a structured, jointly accredited graduate school that builds engineering capacity where it is needed most. By creating a shared talent pool with dual recognition in both countries, SAGGS delivers long-term value for students, universities, industry, and the bilateral relationship between South Africa and Germany.

2. Main Project Objectives

As a joint initiative of THENSA (representing nine South African and one Namibian university) and DHIK (a network of 37 German universities), SAGGS — the South African–German Graduate School — is designed to:

- ✓ **Strengthen internationalisation** of German universities on the African continent.
- ✓ **Build capacity** at Technology-focused Universities through jointly developed, practice-oriented engineering programmes at postgraduate level (BEng Tech Hons, PGDip, Meng Pr)
- ✓ **Create a shared talent pool** for the German–South African economy, with graduates qualified to register as Professional Engineers in South Africa and able to access the German and European labour markets through dual EUR-ACE/ECSA accreditation

SAGGS will be established at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in Pretoria, South Africa.



TUT Campus

Picture: https://www.tut.ac.za

4. Partner Institutions and Project Team

- ***Esslingen University of Applied Sciences – Germany***
  - Prof. Dr. Siegfried Zürn, Aboubacar Keita
- ***Tshwane University of Technology – South Africa***
  - Prof. Dr. Ben van Wyk, Dr. Dolf Steyn
- ***THENSA – South Africa***
  - Prof. Dr. Henk de Jager, Ms Christelle Venter, Ms Nirmala Moodley
- ***DHIK – Germany***
  - Prof. Dr. Siegfried Zürn (Executive Coordinator South Africa)
  - Prof. Dr. Norbert Grünwald (Head of SAGGS, former rector of Wismar University),



Kontakt auf der Tagung: Prof. Dr. Siegfried Zürn (Siegfried.Zuern@hs-Esslingen.de)



Delegates at the 2nd THENSA/ DHIK Colloquium 2026 in Zittau

Picture: Rafael Sampedro

3. Planned Activities (2026-2029)

WP 1 – *Institutional Establishment of SAGGS*
WP 2 – *Admin. management & governance*
WP 3 – *Curriculum development and refinement*
WP 4 – *Development of "German Competence" module*
WP 5 – *Accreditation (EUR-ACE and ECSA)*
WP 6 – *Continuous quality assurance*
WP 7 – *German staff (teaching export) and COIL*
WP 8 – *Promoting student mobility*
WP 9 – *Research and teaching visits in Germany*
WP 10 – *Joint publications and conference papers*
WP 11 – *Creation of active student and alumni network*
WP 12 – *September Schools*
WP 13 – *Marketing and student recruitment*
WP 14 – *Transition to independent organisation*



Impressions of the 1st THENSA-DHIK Septemberschool 2025:
Visit of SARETEC (CPUT) / CPUT Bellville Campus / Module Sustain2030 PLAN B

Pictures: DHIK

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