

Milpark student takes #1 spot in SA in Saica's first board exam

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For Rune Maritz, it came as a surprise to find out she not only passed her recent Saica ITC board exam - but also beat more than 2,000 students to claim her place as the country's top student.



Rune Maritz

Waiting for results is a nerve-racking time for any student, so the sense of relief – and then surprise – was immense for postgraduate accounting student Rune Maritz when this year's Saica ITC board exam results were announced. Not only did she pass, but she beat 2,057 other students taking the exam to emerge as South Africa's top student.

"This is truly a special achievement, and we send massive congratulations to Rune," says Gareth Olivier, Milpark and CA Connect's Head of Professional Accounting Department. He says what makes her results even more impressive is that Rune – who is studying via online learning with Milpark CA Connect while working as a trainee accountant – wrote alongside full-time students from other

more traditional contact universities.

Despite the stellar result, Maritz's journey to academic success has not always been smooth sailing. The 26-year-old has encountered many challenges along the way, like when her appendix burst during end-of-year exams as an undergraduate, causing her to fail some subjects. But Maritz never gave up and is now reaping the benefits of her hard work.

Maritz gives plenty of credit to the lecturers at Milpark. "The staff at Milpark CA Connect are amazing," she says. "Coming from a contact learning background, I didn't know what to expect when I started."

But she was soon impressed by the quality of the course curriculum and the lecturers. She also liked the flexible course design and being able to structure course modules. Lecturers were available day and even night, responding quickly to questions. Some of their tips really made a difference, she says, like drawing up a timetable and sticking to it.

While a lot of discipline has gone into Maritz's excellent results, she believes success is about much more than marks. "You have to believe in yourself, and you have to be able to motivate yourself." The aspiring chartered accountant says she had many days of feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, where she gave herself pep talks in front of the mirror.

During the second part of the year, she was working full days at the office, then coming home to exercise and have dinner, sitting down to study between 7pm and 11pm. On weekends, she allocated 10 hours on both Saturday and Sunday. Friday evenings she took off to socialise with friends. Occasionally, when she felt she was pushing herself too hard, she would take a day off over the weekend to recover and recharge.

Apart from allocating time for exercise and sleep alongside studying – and creating a study plan (and keeping to it) – Rune has a few helpful tips for other people pursuing further education. "Getting your mindset right is key. Know what your goal is, why you are studying, and what you are working for. It's also important to speak up if you need help; this journey is much easier when you have people encouraging and supporting you. If you don't have a support system, use Milpark's excellent resources. And finally, forgive yourself if you fail or didn't manage to study – then start again."

Maritz believes Milpark could be the future of teaching. "It gives you more freedom. I love being able to choose and structure how I study and for how long."

Milpark's head of Department is thrilled that Rune's result has been closely matched by her fellow Milpark students. "We are over the moon that in Saica's most recent ITC exam, 96% of our students who wrote the exam for the first time passed. The national pass rate is 59% and our students were by a long way the best performing compared to other distance and private institutions as well as most of the contact universities."

Rune will now work towards the second board exam and eventually qualify as a chartered accountant. This, she believes, will open many doors for her career. "That is why I work so hard, to give myself opportunities in future."

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