

Absa launches data science and engineering academy

Absa recently launched its first data science and engineering academy. This academy is designed to foster emerging talent in the field of data and aims to transform its first cohort of 20 learners into data specialists, with advanced knowledge and skills to deliver value across the data lifecycle.



Ridwaan Rasool | iimage supplied

Data Science and Engineering has become a scarce and critical skill due to the ever-expanding volume of information in the digital age. The increasing growth of devices and online platforms implies a growing demand for individuals who can effectively navigate and interpret data. This skill is essential for making informed decisions, solving complex problems, and staying competitive in various fields.

To address the skills gap challenge, the Absa Data Science and Engineering Academy was launched. It is a 12-month programme which will equip learners with the knowledge and skills required for data engineering jobs combining development, cloud computing, and big data expertise. The learners will delve into aspects such as storage, moving and processing big data and data quality assurance.

The programme will have a "double programme" approach, where an accredited learnership is combined with a practical skills programme. This ensures that the candidates gain both formal accreditation and simultaneously acquire much-needed workplace experience.

Liesle Barendse, leadership and learning development specialist at Absa Group says, "We are pleased to be collaborating

with Explore AI on the Data Science and Engineering Academy. At Absa, we are committed to empowering the youth with the skills they need for the jobs of the future. Our priority is supporting our learners through skills development programmes and helping them become more employable and ultimately changing lives.”

According to a recent study from the World Economic Forum, technology adoption trends indicate a strong focus on big data, cloud computing, and Artificial Intelligence, with over 75% of companies planning adoption within the next five years. Big data is listed as one of the biggest drivers of job growth and ranks third among company skills-training priorities, indicating its importance in the technology landscape.

Ridwaan Rasool, chief analytics officer for Absa Technology, underscored data significance, stating, “In the heart of our tech strategy lies the recognition that data is not just a tool, it's the compass guiding our journey into the future. By empowering our learners and helping them to enhance their data capabilities, we aim to drive greater efficiencies and create services and products that truly resonate with our customers.”

Absa also runs other academies in the technology space, exemplifying its commitment to ongoing education and youth empowerment. The Digital Academy has been a crucial partner for the past nine years, providing learnerships in full-stack development. Their programmes not only address critical skills development but also establish a sustainable talent pipeline for Absa.

In the 2022/2023 period, Absa Technology made significant investments in 31 initiatives involving 622 students. The focus was on bridging the skills gap among unemployed youth by aligning with identified scarce and critical skills, including software engineering, solution design/architecture, cybersecurity, data engineering, and platform engineering. Notably, half of the participants were female and 18% were learners with disabilities.

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