

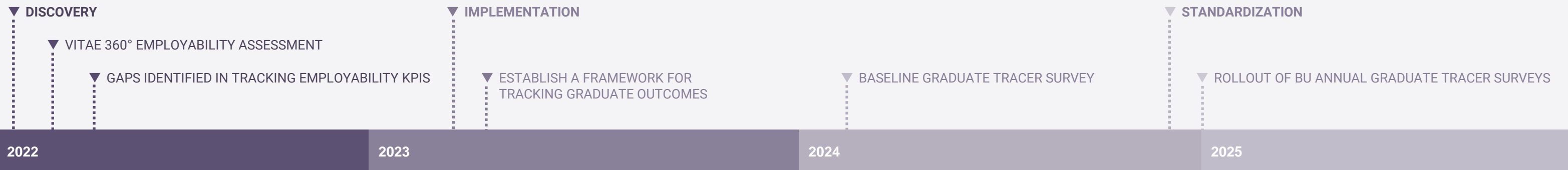
TRACKING GRADUATE OUTCOMES: DEMYSTIFYING EMPLOYABILITY

BOTHO UNIVERSITY, AFRICA

Botho University (BU) is a high quality private tertiary education provider that operates across Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, and Namibia. BU offers fully accredited, industry-aligned qualifications, and online programs to over 5,000 students in all countries of operation. Over the last few years, IFC and BU have partnered on multiple engagements toward strengthening the university's employability practices. In 2024, IFC completed an advisory engagement to support best practices in graduate data collection.

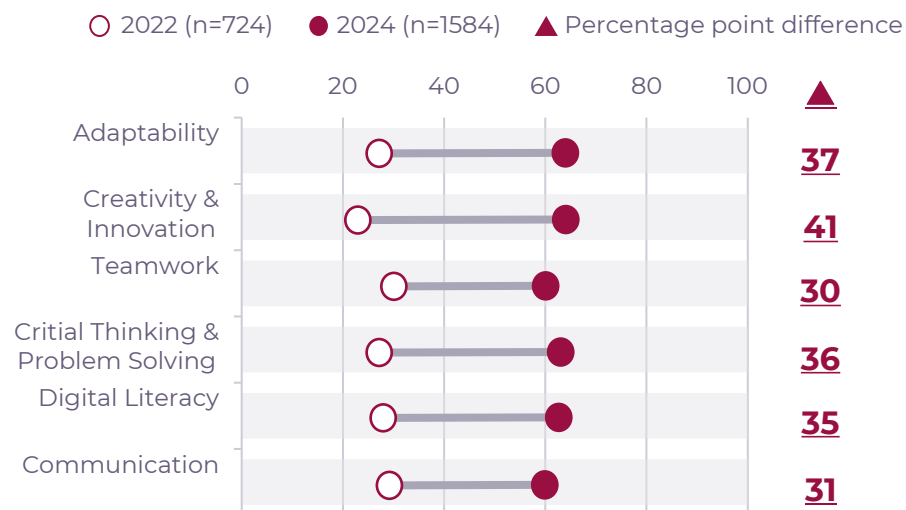


BOTHO UNIVERSITY TIMELINE



PRIORITIZE EMPLOYABILITY

% of Graduates Reporting Employability Skills



Vitae's 360° Employability Assessment empowers universities to enhance employability strategies through data. For BU, the assessment established a foundational benchmark for growth and identified opportunities to improve graduate data collection methods.

DEFINE EMPLOYABILITY KPIS AND STANDARDS

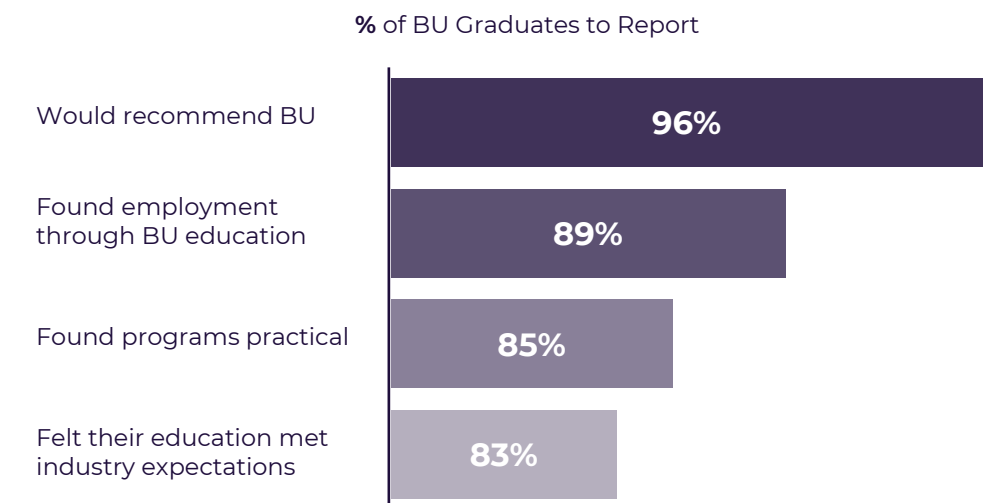
New and Improved Operations



These optimizations doubled the graduate survey response rate. BU improved protocols, resulting in new employability indicators, an updated database, affordable survey tools, scalable processes, and a baseline tracer study.

ESTABLISH DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Baseline Graduate Tracer Survey



Collecting direct feedback from BU graduates revealed crucial insights and sentiments that educators needed for decision-making. This valuable resource prompted BU to roll out its own annual graduate tracer survey with the tools and techniques gained from assessment.



Botho University Comprehensive Employability Strategies

In an interview with IFC's Vitae, Botho University shares the unique challenges of launching a graduate tracer survey; from lack of updated contact information to the need to educate alumni on the importance of their feedback.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Aravinda Ram

Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
Employability and Technology

How Botho University's strategy became more data-driven by partnering with IFC's Vitae.

How did BU's strategy evolve to become more data-driven?

We had always recognized the importance of graduate feedback and had been conducting telephonic interviews calling our graduates one-by-one in the past. However, this method was tedious and didn't provide data that was reliable or easy to utilize effectively. The Vitae 360° employability assessment highlighted the strategic importance of data driven decisions and motivated us to explore how we could improve the quality of our employability data.

Our first step was to take the online short Graduate Tracer Workshop on the Vitae website. Intrigued, by the possibilities we sought IFC's expertise on improving our tracer studies. The team provided us with training and valuable insights on the why, who, when, and how of tracer studies. Experts were brought in to explain the process, outline key considerations, and offer practical tips for structuring the survey to maximize engagement, a previously sticky point for us.

Who were the key players? What role did senior leadership play?

The Student and Alumni Affairs Department led the tracer study, as it is primarily responsible for employability. Senior leadership provided strong support, including budgets, and resources. They were always available when needed – especially for critical meetings with IFC experts and to clarify the outcomes they expected from the study to align with strategic goals and KPIs. Marketing and the Information Systems Department (ISD) also played crucial roles and were actively involved in the process. The entire institution contributed to this effort, as they were educated on the study's significance, timing, and process, and joined forces to encourage alumni participation. The data from Vitae's self-assessment was shared with senior management for feedback, recognition, and heavily informed various strategic decisions.

What was the most significant challenge in conducting the graduate tracer survey, and how was it addressed?

The biggest challenge we faced was obtaining responses from

alumni. Since tracer studies were not previously conducted in the countries where we operate, our first step was to educate alumni on their importance. We emphasized how their feedback plays a crucial role in shaping institutional decisions regarding our academic offerings, employability services, and research. We also shared how the survey would allow us to begin quantifying alumni data, including their feedback on the services we provide.

Vitae supported us by recommending valuable survey tools with a range of benefits, including easy survey administration, automatic reminders, an attractive survey template, and instant analytics and reports. We had never used a large-scale survey tool for such a purpose, so IFC's guidance on its importance was invaluable. It also made the tracer study process feel much more manageable. With this foundation, we launched our own graduate tracer study in 2025 following the initial survey protocol and calendar. We are optimistic that it will provide us with even more valuable insights.

Did you run into anything unexpected, and how did you adapt?

When we mined our Student Information System for contacts, we did not have updated contact information which would impact our responses. So, we went ahead and split the process into two phases. Phase 1 was to get alumni to update their contact details – increasing the quality of contacts. Phase 2 was to distribute the survey to the updated contact list.

What information surprised you, or was unexpected?

We always thought that the top reason for our graduates going for further studies would be because there were no jobs in their field of study. Surprisingly, the results showed that most students who were pursuing further studies with us during the survey week simply wanted more in-depth training. That said, "because there are no jobs in my field of study" followed closely as the 2nd top reason graduates undertook further studies. Another surprise, many of our graduates who were employed said they earned very low salaries in the jobs they held during the survey week.

Furthermore, a larger percentage of unemployed graduates were

women in all the countries we operate. While this last point was not as surprising, it provided evidence of a disparity we had suspected. It reaffirmed the need for stronger decisions around employability services to various groups.

How did Vitae experts help glean insights?

The Vitae experts were very knowledgeable, helpful, and amazing. In fact, we had little knowledge of the formal process behind the tracer survey and learning about the survey calendar, protocol, survey week etc. was invaluable. There were many important nuances in designing an effective survey – from what are the questions we should be asking, why, how it is framed, its answer choices, and the length of the survey. These were extensively deliberated and quite exhausting. We did not know there was so much to it. We debated how we would launch the survey, and received help from IFC experts on various options, pros, and cons. It was very helpful, and we eventually decided to invest in a tool that we now use for many other things. Training gave us options we would not have considered otherwise.

How have you used these insights, and what future insights are you excited about?

Apart from mining strong insights for curriculum reviews and student support services, we recently launched the 2025 Graduate Tracer at-scale, and the training took the guesswork out of this process. The results have helped us to share confidently that we are doing serious and intentional work in demystifying employability through our education. We don't know of any institution in the four countries we operate in who has embarked on such a large-scale exercise of conducting tracer studies and gathering such data. We worked hard to earn our humble bragging rights thanks to IFC. We have developed a strong partnership with them as this marked our hat-trick of projects with them, making them a natural choice for us to turn to for support in the future. In fact, we are already on our 4th project with them which is the Equality in Education and Employment (E3) Initiative that seeks to explore best practices to utilize data and evidence and create a more inclusive workforce.



An innovation of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, Vitae helps higher education institutions develop pathways to improve the graduate employability and outcomes. Our tools offer a data-driven approach for institutions to identify their relative strengths and weaknesses while evaluating themselves against a global benchmark of best practices.

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Scan the code below to learn more and **check your institutional practices:** <https://bit.ly/4fhVqb4>

