



## The International School of Tanning Technology (ISTT) Grahamstown, South Africa

Situated in Grahamstown, close to the Southern tip of Africa is a leather school with an excellent pedigree. ISTT was started in 1999 by two ex LIRI Technologies staff members, with Dr. Clive Jackson-Moss as managing director and Karl Flowers as technical and training manager. They were contracted by Rhodes University to provide the training for LIRI and established themselves with additional onsite industrial training courses and consultancies. ISTT now provides much of the educational needs for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) including countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and as far afield as Kenya.

LIRI Technologies closed its doors in 2000 after a number of troubled years and ISTT bought the equipment, technical information and library. The facilities were rented, and ISTT continued to provide the education and training for the South African leather industry under the umbrella of Rhodes University.

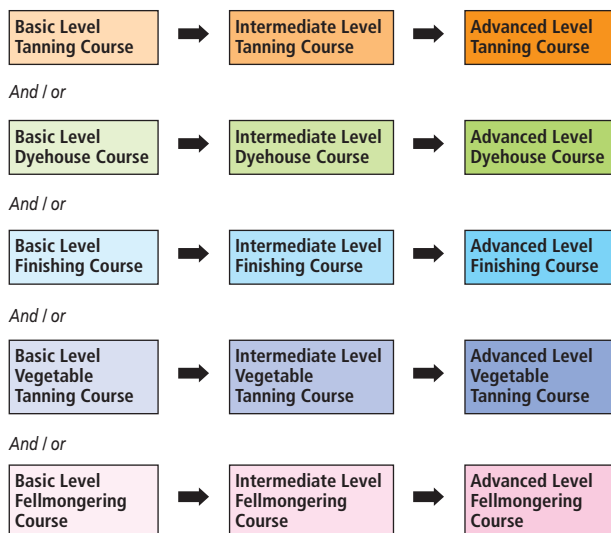
In 2001, Rhodes University determined that leather education was not in line with its core business and ended their relationship with ISTT. With the approval of the Department of Education and the local industry, ISTT affiliated itself with Port Elizabeth Technikon in 2001 which amalgamated with Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in 2005. ➤





### Panel 1: Study options

A number of different study options are available. The diagram below shows the possible study routes that could be followed. Such a program allows great flexibility with regard to the study options.



In 2006, Dr. Clive Jackson-Moss bought property in the Grahamstown industrial area and moved to new larger facilities on the outskirts of town. The expansion and modernisation involves a great deal of construction and will be an ongoing project for a number of years to come.

The move has had little effect on the training provision provided by ISTT, achieved through a combination of traditional distance education materials, practical training courses in ISTT's tannery, and on-site training courses. All training is outcomes-based and imparts skills that are directly applicable to the students' job.

ISTT offers courses in:

- Fellmongering
- The processing of raw hides to wet-blue
- Vegetable tanning
- Dyehouse operations
- Leather finishing

Each module may be taken at a basic, intermediate or advanced level—as indicated in *Panel 1*—to maximise the versatility in the training options for the students and their employers. ISTT also offers Executive Leather courses, Gameskin Tanning courses and bespoke on-site courses to meet the needs of the industry.

The National Higher Certificate in Leather Technology is a collaborative ISTT-NMMU offering, aimed at production managers as a technical course. ISTT also offers post-graduate degrees at the BSc (Hons), MSc and PhD levels in collaboration with NMMU. All basic, intermediate and advanced modules include a one- or two-week practical course held at ISTT to instruct and assess the students from a practical perspective. While at ISTT, the students are housed in town at Rhodes University's Continuing Education Centre (CEC), purpose built accommodation for adult learners, and transported to-and-from the facilities each day.

Dr. Clive Jackson-Moss, supported by up to six tannery staff

members and an administrator, provides the majority of the instruction. ISTT also employs a number of industrial consultants to assist with teaching, and close relationships with chemical companies provide a number of highly experienced chemical representatives willing to providing their time and expertise for specialist training courses.

Facilities include a lecture room and computer with 24-hour internet access, and a fit-for-purpose laboratory for indicative physical and chemical leather testing, and effluent analysis. The



There is considerable emphasis on practical applications at ISTT.



Speciality leathers produced in the model tannery.



Presentation by Dr. Clive Jackson-Moss.



Pilot scale tanning and retanning section.

large tannery includes 20 process vessels of various sizes and all the equipment required to produce conventional leathers. Local industry usually offers ISTT first choice for any equipment they wish to sell or donate.

ISTT has production facilities and is able to produce small volumes of leather for local crafters and includes mainly vegetable tanned material, sheepskin nappa and gameskins. They provide partially processed rawhide for the production of drums for African Musical Instruments, a local company. ISTT has performed chemical trials for companies and a number of raw material trials and technical reports for the South African agricultural research institute.

ISTT has averaged about 200 students a year since 2001 and many of the past students occupy important positions in companies locally and internationally. ISTT's future is directly linked to the South African leather industry and in a highly volatile international market there is no better motivation for a training company to provide a first-class education for its industry. 



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## Wet End



## Finishing



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