

South Africa's first female Audi master technician

Audi vehicle technician Chelsea van Wyk, 25, has racked up an impressive achievement at an early stage of her career, qualifying as the first woman Audi master and diagnostic technician in South Africa.



Chelsea van Wyk

The Audi master technician certification is an intense programme involving 52 days of training over four to five years, covering engine mechanics, engine management, transmission, air-conditioning, running gear and driver assist systems.

Van Wyk works at the Audi Somerset West dealership. She says she fell into the motor industry when she came across an application for a mechanical internship and applied on a whim. She says she fell into the field. "I just took a chance, and I'm so glad I did."

"I was a tomboy in my school years, and I always had male friends," she says. "I'm comfortable being surrounded by men in the workshop. You need a bit of a thick skin at times, but it's easy to handle. There are different personalities in every work environment, and the workshop is no different."

"I've never been judged or marginalised in the workplace. We have an amazing work environment, where there is a clear acceptance of women's abilities. Now I have the qualification to back that up."

Van Wyk's success – reaching the optimum technical qualification within seven years of starting at the company – is a

living expression of the Audi principles of progress and forging one's own path.

Highly sort after

"Chelsea's achievement is impressive," said Chrystal Christian, head of training and customer experience centre at Audi South Africa. "Only around 60% of Audi technicians who complete the programme eventually reach the certification stage. Chelsea's master technician qualification will make her highly sought after in the automotive industry. We are extremely proud of her achievement and she is a great representation towards Audi's Vorsprung values."

Van Wyk studied for her Audi master and diagnostic technician courses while pregnant with her first child – Emma (now four months old) – and also recently got married. She returns from maternity leave freshly qualified and ready to keep making a difference for Audi customers within the Audi aftersales and servicing environment.

"I can't wait to get back to work," she says. "Since becoming a technician, Audi is all I've known. I've grown to love the technology, and the way the company does things. There's so much structure to everything. I've learned that systems are as important as the actual knowledge."

Her favourite vehicle is the 4.0 twin turbo Audi RS 7, but that she enjoys working on all types of cars. "I love working on every one of the Audi models. Each make, and model differs and that keeps me interested in learning more about them."

Van Wyk looks forward to building technical experience in the next phase of her career, and to continuing to update her knowledge to keep pace with the progress of Audi innovations. "You can't stop learning, because Audi technology evolves so quickly."

She enjoys the problem-solving and diagnostic part of her work. "Diagnostics can be challenging, but keeps you on your toes, and it's rewarding to reach a solution. It makes every day at work an interesting one. It keeps me going."

It is important for mechanical technicians to know their physical abilities. "Not all work is computerised," she says. "You can diagnose a fault but repairing it may still require removing the engine and replacing the part. The physical work can put strain on your body. You need to know your limits and not be shy to ask for help. Everyone in the workshop will need help at some point and it's great to have a strong team to support you when you need it."

Van Wyk's advice to young women interested in entering the field of automotive mechanics is to strive to make their goals a reality, to show courage despite the odds. "If you want to be a mechanic, you need to strive for that. Don't be scared that it's perceived to be a male-dominated industry. Stay dedicated and stay the course."

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