

HELTASA ANNUAL (Un)CONFERENCE 2025

13-16 October 2025

**Theme: Productive Disruption:
Transformational Learning and Teaching
for Sustainable Development in Higher
Education**



(Un)Conference mode: Venue-based (in-person only)

(Un)Conference Dates: 13 - 16 October 2025

Pre-(Un)conference workshop: 13 October 2025

Location: Postdam, East London

Call for Proposals

Walter Sisulu University (WSU) as the host university for The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) 2025 annual (un)conference invites academics, practitioners, students, and partners from across the higher education and development sectors to submit proposals for papers, panel discussions, oral presentations, poster presentations and creative sessions (e.g. ignite, pecka kucha, speed geeking, etc).

This year's theme calls us to inspire actionable insights for advancing global, equitable and sustainable higher education by fostering discussions around innovative curriculum, pedagogical approaches and sustainability initiatives. We seek contributions that are scholarly, practice-oriented, reflective, and provocative to cultivate a collaborative culture among higher education institutions (HEIs) that aligns personal and institutional objectives with global sustainability efforts.

Sub-theme 1: Interdisciplinary approaches in learning and teaching in higher education

This theme aims to enhance higher educational practices by integrating multiple disciplines, fostering a more holistic and adaptable learning environment.

- Teaching models that integrate **different disciplinary approaches**.
- Using **real-world scenarios** that require input from different disciplines (e.g., managing pandemics, environmental crises and medical malpractice).
- Multi-disciplinary simulation-based learning.
- Joint teaching on topics (e.g. in science, law and health).
- **Interdisciplinary research** in undergraduate teaching.

- Interdisciplinary projects that tackle **sustainable development goals**.
- Capstone projects where **students in different programmes** collaborate to solve complex issues (e.g., access to healthcare, vaccine distribution justice, environmental health).
- How to communicate and collaborate across disciplinary boundaries.

Sub-theme 2: Reimagining Knowledge: Blending Traditional and Innovative Approaches in Higher Education

This sub-theme explores how higher education can honour indigenous knowledge, oral traditions, and multilingual realities while embracing emerging technologies and pedagogies:

- Tradition Meets Technology: Using augmented reality (AR) to teach abstract or complex concepts through oral histories and case-based simulations.
- Backwards Design Meets Ubuntu: Designing inclusive, culturally rooted curricula that reflect community values and co-creation with students.
- Multimodal Meaning-Making: Encouraging expression through drawing, movement, home languages, and digital tools (e.g., voice-to-text) in multilingual classrooms.
- Translanguaging in Education: Classroom practices that support students' linguistic resources for learning.
- Decolonising Assessments: From exams to culturally responsive assessments like storytelling, performance, and crafting.
- Reflections on Teaching and Learning: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), student-lecturer

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- reflections on pedagogical practice.
- Postgraduate Supervision: Innovative and decolonial approaches to postgraduate mentorship and supervision.
- Decolonising Assessments: Incorporating indigenous practices and alternative value systems into assessments.

Sub-theme 3: The Digital Revolution: Technology, AI, and Data-Driven Learning

This sub-theme invites explorations of how AI, data analytics and digital tools are reshaping pedagogy and learning design in higher education:

- AI-Enhanced Teaching: Co-teaching with AI assistants, chatbots, and intelligent tutors.
- Games and the Lecture: Building low-code or no-code educational games or simulations to teach concepts playfully.
- Real-Time Feedback: Using tools like Google Forms, Kahoot, and Mentimeter for formative assessment and student engagement.
- Virtual and Augmented Realities: Creating immersive, flipped-classroom experiences.
- Pedagogical Demonstrations: "How I teach" and "How I learn" sessions from educators and students.
- Smart Lessons with AI Assistants: Applications of AI in teaching.
- Learning Analytics: Using data-driven methods to assess learning outcomes.

Sub-theme 4: Bridging Gaps: Equity, Access and Inclusive Policies

This sub-theme addresses structural and pedagogical strategies to make higher education more inclusive and equitable:

- Teaching for Equity: Differentiated instruction, scaffolded group work, and tiered assignments in large classes.
- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Teaching with relevance to multilingual and diverse student bodies.
- Inclusive Design: Adapting learning materials for visual, auditory, sensory, and cognitive accessibility.
- Peer Teaching Models: Empowering students to co-teach and lead.
- Student Success and Wellbeing: Innovations in support services, mentorship, and institutional strategies that promote holistic student development.

- Teaching for Equity: Designing curricula that address socio-economic disparities.
- Student success and well-being: Studying the economic determinants of academic success and proposing financial support strategies.

Sub-theme 5: Higher Education for a Sustainable Future

We invite contributions that address sustainability, climate consciousness, and systems thinking in curriculum and pedagogy:

Systems Thinking in the Classroom: Creating interdisciplinary links across subjects to teach global interconnectedness.

Teaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Designing Cross-Disciplinary Challenges (e.g., "How might we reduce campus waste by 50%?")

Green Pedagogies: Bringing nature into the classroom through curriculum or learning environments.

Assessing for the Future: Designing assessments that reflect sustainability competencies and real-world impact.

Systems thinking: Teaching interconnections between disciplines, environment and society.

Green pedagogies: Exploring environmental and sustainable pedagogies.

Sub-theme 6: Entrepreneurial Mindsets: Innovation and Sustainability for the Future

- This theme seeks approaches that foster creativity, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial thinking among students and staff.
- The 4Cs in Action: Embedding Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, and Communication across the curriculum.
- Community-Linked Projects: Teaching innovation through real-world, community-based problem-solving and developing student initiatives that address local challenges.
- Micro-Enterprise Simulations: Simulating entrepreneurial ventures as part of coursework.
- Learning from Failure: Teaching resilience, risk-taking, and iteration as part of learning.
- Fostering Creativity.

Target Audience

The (un)conference welcomes a diverse group of stakeholders in higher education and beyond, including:

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- Academics and researchers in higher education
- Higher education practitioners, professional staff and leaders
- Industry leaders and entrepreneurs
- Students and youth activists
- Representatives from government and non-governmental organisations
- Technology and digital learning practitioners
- Environmental and sustainability advocates
- Academic development practitioners

Types of Contributions and (Un)Conference Formats

The HELTASA (Un)Conference 2025 provide opportunities to a wide range of participants to share ideas, research studies, thoughts and engage in one of the listed formats:

Keynote Addresses/Provocations

- Duration: 30 minutes per session
- Format: Presentations by invited participants to share provocations related to higher education, sustainability, and innovation.

Research Papers/Oral presentations

- Duration: 15 - 20 minutes (including Q & A)
- Format: Brief presentations focusing on research findings, followed by a short discussion.

Activity-Based Presentations

- Duration: 10 – 15 minutes (including Q & A)
- Format: Presentations sharing practical experiences or changes in activities or practices in teaching and learning.

Workshops/Playshops

- Duration: 1 hour per session
- Format: Interactive, hands-on sessions designed to engage participants in active learning. Please submit your proposed interactive workshop structure and format as part of your proposal.

Panel Discussions

- Duration: 45-60 minutes
- Format: Sessions featuring multiple speakers discussing a common theme, often including audience interaction.

Creative/Multimodal Demonstrations

- Duration: 10 - 15 minutes (including Q & A)
- Format: Artistic presentations such as poetry, song, dance, or other creative expressions related to higher education themes. Showcasing innovative projects.

Poster Presentations

- Duration: 1-hour collective session
- Format: Visual displays of research or projects,

facilitating informal discussions.

Student-Led Sessions

- Duration: 10 -15 minutes including Q&A.
- Format: Sessions organised and presented by students, focusing on topics relevant to student experiences and perspectives.

Exhibitions & Networking Spaces

- Duration: 1-hour session
- Format: Fostering collaborations, talks, one-on-one talks or group talks.

Submission Guidelines

The proposal must include the following information:

- **Proposal Title** (not more than 20 words)
- **Presenter and co-presenter information**
- **Proposal** (Up to 500 words, 3 – 5 keywords are accepted)
- **Engagement questions:** 2 questions for engagement with participants

Join Us

This (un)Conference is more than a gathering; it is a collaborative movement toward transforming higher education in South Africa and the broader Global South. We invite you to share, engage, and imagine a future where education is inclusive, innovative and sustainable.

Important dates

Call issue date:	13 June 2025
Deadline for proposal submissions:	31 July 2025
Feedback on proposal:	15 August 2025
Upload of final proposal:	5 September 2025
Registration date:	19 September 2025
Registration fees:	R5 500.00
Fulltime students, registration fees:	R3 000.00

Registration (including VAT). This package includes:

- (Un)Conference bag
- Tea/Coffee
- Lunch vouchers
- Gala dinner
- HELTASA membership for 2026

Contact email: wsu-heltasa@wsu.ac.za

Secretary: Ms N. Mzileni

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