12th Flexible Futures

HIGHER EDUCATION INNOVATION CONFERENCE

Curriculum for the Future-Ready Graduate

26 – 27 August 2026

Future Africa, University of Pretoria



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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higher education & training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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UNIVERSITY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Welcome Message

Prof Gerrit Stols



Welcome to the 12th Flexible Futures Conference, hosted by the University of Pretoria. We are thrilled to have you join us for this pivotal event focused on “Curriculum for the Future-Ready Graduate”.

As we navigate the evolving landscape of higher education in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), this conference aims to foster meaningful discussions, innovative ideas, and collaborative efforts to shape the curriculum of the future.

Our theme, “Curriculum for the Future-Ready Graduate”, reflects the critical need to design coherent learning journeys that combine deep foundational knowledge with the adaptable skills, critical thinking, ethical judgement, and digital fluency our graduates need to thrive in an AI-enabled world.

We are honoured to host distinguished keynote speakers, including Dr Sizwe Nxasana, education innovator and founder of the Sifiso Learning Group, and Prof Anné Verhoef, who will share their valuable insights on transdisciplinarity and on reimagining graduate outcomes in the age of AI agents.

Throughout the conference, we will explore various sub-themes, including evidence-informed teaching and curriculum design, learning analytics for student success, innovative assessment in the age of AI, work-integrated and community-engaged learning, graduate attributes, blended learning, and academic development for innovation.

We invite you to actively participate in the sessions, engage with fellow researchers, practitioners, and professionals, and contribute to the vibrant discussions. Your presence and contributions are integral to the success of this conference and the advancement of teaching and learning in higher education.

Thank you for joining us at Flexible Futures 2026. Together, let’s design the curriculum for the future-ready graduate.

Warm welcome, and have an excellent conference.

Gerrit Stols

Keynote Speaker



Dr Sizwe Errol Nxasana is a renowned South African business leader and social entrepreneur with a distinguished career spanning corporate leadership, education innovation and social impact. In May 2025, he earned a PhD in Education from the UNESCO PBL Centre at Aalborg University in Denmark. He began his professional journey at Unilever, before founding Sizwe & Co in 1989 – the first black-owned audit practice in KwaZulu-Natal. In 1996, he became the founding partner of Nkonki Sizwe Ntsaluba, now Sizwe Ntsaluba Gobodo (SNG Grant Thornton), which has grown to become the fifth-largest audit firm in South Africa. In 1998, he was appointed CEO of Telkom SA and led the company's dual listing on the Johannesburg and New York Stock Exchanges.

He later served as CEO of the FirstRand Banking Group from 2005 until his retirement from corporate life in September 2015. Following his executive career, Dr Nxasana channelled his focus into transforming education in South Africa. He is the founder of Sifiso Learning Group – a holistic education ecosystem that includes Future Nation Schools, Nation NXT College (the Group's teacher training unit, formerly Future Nation College), iKamva Preschool (formerly Future Nation Schools Preschool) and Sifiso EdTech. Together, these entities are committed to reimagining African education through accessible, technology-enabled and Afrocentric learning, with project-based learning (PBL) at its core to foster critical thinking, collaboration and real-world problem-solving.

Dr Nxasana currently chairs several influential foundations and trusts. He is the Co-founder and Chairperson of the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and the Founder and Chairperson of the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP), which supports financially disadvantaged and "missing middle" students, His contributions have been recognised with honorary doctorates from the University of Fort Hare, Durban University of Technology, the University of Johannesburg, Walter Sisulu University, and UNISA.

Abstract



Transdisciplinarity as the Language and Compass for Mission-Driven Research and Innovation: A Systems Approach to Transforming Higher Education

South African higher education faces persistent and interconnected challenges, including unemployment, inequality, weak educational outcomes, and rapid technological change. These complex societal problems cannot be effectively addressed through disciplinary approaches alone. This presentation argues that transdisciplinarity should serve as the organising language and strategic compass for mission-driven research and innovation at the University of Pretoria (UP), enabling the institution to strengthen disciplinary excellence while mobilising collaborative knowledge to address societal challenges.

The paper proposes a systems-thinking framework that aligns UP's six research themes with mission-oriented research, the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063, and South Africa's National Development Plan. Drawing on practical experiences from the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), ISFAP Foundation, Sifiso Learning Group, MarketPlace Academy, and project-based learning initiatives, it demonstrates how transdisciplinary partnerships between universities, industry, government, schools, and communities can improve curriculum relevance, graduate competencies, and educational impact.

The presentation contends that meaningful institutional transformation requires more than curriculum reform. It requires an epistemological shift towards problem-centred research, cross-faculty collaboration, stakeholder co-creation, and systems innovation. Key enabling conditions include revised Programme Quality Mix (PQM), incentive structures, integrated qualification design, psychological safety, and leadership that promotes collaboration while preserving disciplinary rigour.

The proposed framework offers a practical roadmap for embedding transdisciplinarity within teaching, research, and engagement, positioning universities as catalysts for innovation, inclusive development, and societal impact while maintaining academic excellence.

Keynote Speaker



Prof Anné H. Verhoef is a professor in Philosophy and Director of the North-West University Artificial Intelligence Hub. He holds PhDs from both the University of Stellenbosch and the Free University in Amsterdam. His research interests are, amongst others, academic integrity, the ethics of artificial intelligence, and the philosophy of happiness. He published various academic articles on academic integrity and AI in Higher Education, and he is the co-founder and former associate editor of the academic journal Transformation in Higher Education.

He is also the co-founder of AICSA – the Artificial Intelligence Circle in South Africa for Higher Education. He received the NWU Silver Wings Award in 2024 for his work on academic integrity, and in 2025 he received the NWU Teaching and Learning Leadership award for his work on AI in Higher Education. His latest book, Happiness, Unhappiness and Chance, was published by Bloomsbury at the end of 2025.

Abstract



Beyond assessment redesign: reimagining graduate outcomes in the age of AI agents and the self-recursive university

The advancement of GenAI, reasoning models, and increasingly autonomous AI agents is reshaping higher education. While much institutional attention has focused on adapting assessment practices to mitigate academic integrity risks, less consideration has been given to whether curriculum outcomes themselves remain appropriate for an AI-enabled future. Emerging scholarship argues that AI is not merely a technological tool but a transformative force that redistributes epistemic labour, reconfigures authority and authorship, and challenges traditional assumptions about teaching and learning (Peters, 2025; Jandrić et al., 2022).

The rise of AI tutors, personalised learning systems, and agentic AI requires universities to reconsider which graduate attributes remain uniquely human and which can be augmented by intelligent systems. Contemporary debates increasingly emphasise epistemic agility, ethical judgement, critical evaluation, creativity, and human-AI collaboration as essential competencies. This paper explores how universities can move beyond assessment redesign toward a more fundamental reconsideration of curriculum outcomes for future-ready graduates.

This paper investigates whether higher education institutions are merely modifying assessments to accommodate AI or fundamentally reconsidering graduate outcomes in response to AI-enabled learning environments. It examines the implications of AI agents, personalised tutoring systems, and emerging self-recursive educational models for curriculum design. The study seeks to identify which competencies remain distinctly human, how lecturer roles are evolving, and what forms of curriculum transformation are required to prepare graduates for an increasingly AI-mediated knowledge economy.

The study adopts a qualitative conceptual and policy-analysis approach. First, contemporary literature on AI-enabled education, postdigital learning, agentic AI, and superintelligence is reviewed to identify emerging trends influencing teaching, learning, and curriculum design. Second, institutional responses from higher education contexts are analysed, including curriculum renewal initiatives, AI policies, and assessment redesign strategies.

Abstract



Third, insights from academic staff discussions, institutional workshops, and curriculum review processes are examined to explore how educators perceive the impact of AI on graduate attributes and disciplinary outcomes. Particular attention is given to the emergence of AI agents as co-teachers, precision tutors, and knowledge mediators.

The analysis is informed by postdigital and socio-technical perspectives that view educational change as the result of interactions between technological systems, institutional structures, and human actors. The study ultimately develops a conceptual framework for evaluating curriculum outcomes in AI-enabled higher education environments.

The analysis suggests that many universities remain focused primarily on assessment adaptation rather than comprehensive curriculum transformation. However, growing evidence indicates that AI-enabled learning environments require a shift from content acquisition toward higher-order competencies. Future-ready graduates increasingly need skills in AI orchestration, critical verification of AI outputs, ethical decision-making, interdisciplinary synthesis, and reflective judgement.

The findings further indicate that the lecturer's role is evolving from content expert and information provider to learning designer, mentor, curator, and facilitator of human-AI collaboration. AI agents offer significant opportunities for personalised learning, immediate feedback, scalable support, and improved access to educational resources. Nevertheless, risks include over-automation, reduced cognitive engagement, epistemic dependence, and erosion of disciplinary understanding. Effective curriculum responses therefore require explicit integration of AI literacy, process-oriented assessment, human-centred learning experiences, and opportunities for students to critically interrogate machine-generated knowledge rather than merely consume it.

AI-enabled education demands more than revised assessment practices; it requires a fundamental reconsideration of curriculum purposes and graduate outcomes. Universities must identify and cultivate capabilities that remain uniquely human while enabling students to collaborate effectively with increasingly sophisticated AI systems. The future-ready graduate will be distinguished not by the ability to reproduce information, but by critical judgement, ethical responsibility, creativity, and the capacity to direct and evaluate AI-generated knowledge in complex real-world contexts.

Conference Programme

Wednesday 26 August 2026			
07:00 - 08:30	Registration: Future Africa Auditorium Foyer		
08:30 - 10:00	**OPENING SESSSION** Future Africa Auditorium		
08:30 - 08:50	**WELCOME ADDRESS: Prof Loretta Feris |** University of Pretoria**,** Vice Principle: Academic		
09:00 - 09:50	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Dr Sizwe Nxasana |** Sifiso Learning Group Transdisciplinary as the language and compass **Chair: Gerrit Stols**		
09:50 - 10:00	**VENDOR PRESENTATION: Janet Naudè | McGraw-Hill** Future-Ready Graduates don't happen by chance. They are designed.		
10:00 - 10:35	Refreshments		
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
10:40 - 12:40	Session focus: Learning analytics, evidence and student success **Chair: Juan-Claude Lemmens**	Session focus: Work-integrated and community-engaged learning **Chair: Eugene Machimana**	Session focus: Graduate attributes, professional readiness and hybrid health-sciences education **Chair: Ishana Gangaram**
10:40 - 11:00	Investigating curriculum data analytics through pairwise correlations of module performance **Herman Janse van Vuuren**	More than fun: A reflective account of designing social events that support learning and community **Ayla Inggs**	Hybrid neuroanatomy teaching through TPACK: A toolbox for medical education **Jayshree Harangee, Albert van Schoor, Johanna Lubbe, Gerda Venter**
11:00 - 11:20	Determining academic and non-academic factors for a pharmacology education success prediction model: a scoping review **Werner Cordier, Charné Scully**	Bridging inequalities in work-integrated and community-engaged learning for future-ready graduates in rural contexts **Vhonani Olive Netshandama, Tshinakaho Tshilamulele, Nomthandazo Mbandazayo**	Strengthening foundations for graduate readiness: lessons from newly qualified social workers **Leanne Jordaan, Stephan Geyer**
11:20 - 11:40	Understanding student discontinuation in health sciences: insights for institutional learning **Vanessa Steenkamp, Marlize Cochrane-Boeyens**	Beyond grades: defining future-ready graduate attributes for physiotherapy and radiography students **Elzette Korkie, Zanelle Kruger**	Declare or conceal: a gamified tax simulation for developing ethical reasoning and pervasive skills in higher education **Nadia Bauer**
11:40 - 12:00	Designed for distraction: the impact of QR-based micro-assessments to rescue attention in modern classrooms **Pierre Palm, June Serem**	The amazing radiography race: a snapshot into the reality of work-integrated learning for first-year radiography students **Hafsa Essop, Zanelle Kruger, Kealeboga Menwe**	The innovation triad: an evidence-informed approach to designing ai-enabled online work-integrated learning **Emad Ghabrial, Mari van Wyk, Anton van Dyk**

Conference Programme

Wednesday 26 August 2026			
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
12:00 - 12:20	Thinking critically, questioning sceptically: is there a correlation between these traits? **Charisa De Klerk, Corlia Joynt**	Bite the gap: a community-engaged, multilingual nutrition education intervention to improve complementary feeding practices **Phumudzo Mamphwe Tshiambara, Rone du Plessis, Rachel Unsted**	skills and employability: stakeholder perceptions of TVET engineering graduates in South Africa's uncertain labour market **Ke Yu, Constance Magxunyane**
12:20 - 12:40	From lectures to leaderboards: levelling up large-class teaching through gamification **Evangeline Nortje**	Moja Gabedi: Transforming a neglected site to an innovative hub for community engagement and transdisciplinary research **Eugene Machimana, Innocent Chauke, Pontsho Masele**	Who is doing the thinking? PhD supervision in the age of GenAI **Ansie Smit, Michael J von Maltitz, Inger Fabris-Rotelli, Danielle Roberts, Daniel Maposa, Sonali Das**
12:40 - 13:40	**Lunch: The Hub**		
13:40 - 13:50	Transition to parallel session venues		
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
13:50 - 15:50	Session focus: AI-enabled teaching, learning and curriculum design **Chair: Heather Goode**	Session focus: Academic development, accessibility and learning-design innovation **Chair: Marena Lotriet**	Session focus: AI-supported curriculum design and academic literacy **Chair: Gail Barry**
13:50 - 14:10	No wool over our AIs: Using GenAI to develop evaluative judgement **Andrew Way, Karin Wolff**	Developing a contemporary framework for postgraduate supervision: an interactive guide to foster learner autonomy **Celesté Pretorius, Kitty Uys, Zelda White, Elzette Korkie, Mariatha Yazbek, Carin Maree**	Same gradebook, different perspectives: comparing lecturer practice and student experience **Ciska Snyman, Estelle Drysdale**
14:10 - 14:30	From visual to tactile: reframing diagrammatic learning for inclusive technology education **Riana Steyn, Alicia Rossouw, Zak Claasen**	The Power of Four - Integrating an English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, and Sepedi vocabulary bank to support multilingual first-year social work students in 2026 **Elmien Claassens**	The translation layer: how learning design unlocks AI's pedagogical potential in the postgraduate classroom **Motshedisi Mathibe, Liezl Wagenaar**

Conference Programme

Wednesday 26 August 2026			
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
14:30 - 14:50	Student perceptions and engagement with AI role play as an experiential learning tool in social work education **Jenita Chiba**	Level up learning: from broken classrooms to gamified ecosystems in health science education **Amanda Jankowitz, Oluwarotimi Randle, Ané Orchard**	From academic records to student success: an AI approach to identifying at-risk students **Marios Joannou**
14:50 - 15:10	Funatomy: student perceptions and lecturer reflections on game-based learning in first-year anatomy **Gerda Venter, Adri Serfontein**	The designer who (almost) learned to code: AI-augmented capability-building for future-ready, accessible curriculum **Liezl Wagenaar**	human in the loop: the role of educators in the design and implementation of AI-enabled teaching and learning in academic literacy programmes **Junitha Naidoo, Oscar Eybers**
15:10 - 15:30	Developing future-ready graduates through AI-enabled simulation: curriculum innovation in occupational therapy education **Sharifa Moosa Tayob, Karin van Niekerk, Pam Gretschel**	"Class for teams": training for innovation **Alastair Smart, Manyaku Maroga, Hannelie Untiedt**	From challenge to opportunity: AI-enabled teaching, learning and curriculum design in physiotherapy education **Elzette Korkie, Shante Govender, Ashley Kruger, Neo Mandewa, Nomthandazo Mngomezulu, Anja Pampel, Kiame Smit**
15:30 - 15:50	**PANEL DISCUSSION** Recognising and advancing teaching excellence: pathways to teaching awards **Chair: Dr Mashango Sithole**		
16:00	End Of Day 1		

Conference Programme

Thursday 27 August 2026			
07:00 - 08:30	Registration: Future Africa Auditorium Foyer		
08:30 – 10:00	**PANEL DISCUSSION AND PLENARY SESSION** Future Africa Auditorium		
08:30 - 09:20	**PANEL DISCUSSION**: Deputy Deans Teaching and Learning Transdisciplinary teaching and learning **Chair: Prof Alta Van der Merwe**		
09:20 - 10:10	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Prof Anné Verhoef** | North-West University Beyond Assessment Redesign: Reimagining Graduate Outcomes in the Age of AI Agents and the Self-Recursive University **Chair: Rejoice Nsibande**		
10:10 - 10:40	**Refreshments**		
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
10:40 - 12:20	Session focus: Evidence-informed teaching and high-impact learning innovations **Chair: Faith Mathibedi**	Session focus: Curriculum renewal, quality assurance and inclusive design **Chair: Nonka Vokwana**	Session focus: Innovative assessment, feedback and blended learning **Chair: Mpho Thukane**
10:40 - 11:00	Enabling the scholarship of teaching and learning in complex university systems: recommendations for flourishing **Rejoice Nsibande, Heather Newington, Marius Pienaar**	Educational quality begins with the lecturer; a qualitative inquiry into factors influencing the mental health of university lecturers. **Raashmi Balbadhur, Nthabiseng Phalatse, Cassidy Blackbeard, Nabeela Kharva**	Enabling experiential learning through code evaluation **Warren du Plessis, David Grünewald**
11:00 - 11:20	eFundanathi: changing the game in health science education **Amanda Jankowitz, Lebo Bogoshi, Spha Msimang, Ané Orchard**	More than a score: radiography students' perceptions of the student feedback on teaching surveys **Kealeboga Menwe, Emmanuel Matsebatlela, Hafsa Essop**	AI-Generated feedback and reflection-based assessment for ECSA-Aligned graduate attribute development **Matthew Beekman**
11:20 - 11:40	Designing for all: evaluating universal design for learning in an occupational therapy undergraduate programme **Tania Buys, Kitty Uys, Di Manning, Melandri Claassen**	Making the invisible body visible: exoskeleton-enabled experiential learning in physiotherapy education **Pooveshni Naidoo, Marlize Cochrane-Boeyens**	Preparing future-ready occupational therapy graduates through a community-based primary health care elective: a practice- based curriculum innovation **Helga Lister, Nabeela Kharva**
11:40 - 12:00	Guiding students in the digital age: Recommended neuroanatomy resources for undergraduate medical education **Carmen Steyn, Lané Prigge, Gerda Venter**	Students taking the lead: rethinking academic success through informal staff-student collaboration **Gontse Modisane, Nireshka Soman, Corne Nel, Marlize Cochrane-Boeyens**	The author in the loop: backwards design, storytelling, and human judgment in AI-Assisted course creation **Liezl Wagenaar**

Conference Programme

Thursday 27 August 2026			
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
12:00 - 12:20	Hands-On, Minds-On: Student perceptions of active musculoskeletal anatomy learning **Lané Prigge**	Scaling laboratory-based teaching to large venues without computers: efficiency and impact on student performance **Michael Bouwer, Nita Mennega, Hanlie Smuts**	Standardising clinical demonstrations of specialised radiographic projections through guided simulation and reflective practice **Zanelle Kruger, Hafsa Essop**
12:20 - 13:20	Lunch: The HUB		
13:20 - 13:30	Transition to parallel session venues		
TIME	**AUDITORIUM**	**CONFERENCE 1**	**SCHOOLROOM**
13:30 - 14:30	Session focus: Innovative assessment and future-ready learning design **Chair: Phill Sithole**	Session focus: Learning analytics, student pathways and support interventions **Chair: Sfiso Mabizela**	Session focus: Cross-cutting AI, WIL and internationalisation **Chair: Reeh Tekane**
13:30 - 13:50	Beyond traditional excel assessment: exploring student experiences in a virtual escape room **Ciska Snyman, Mari Van Wyk, Kimera Moodley**	Enablers and constraints of analytics-supported personalised learning in South African higher education **Mashite Tshidi**	Integrating AI tools in work-integrated learning online micro lessons to enhance student engagement **Florence Ntanga, Nurain Aboo**
13:50 - 14:10	Writing to an AI: redesigning assessment in business communication using ai agent interviews **Jana Slippers, Kato Plant**	Kidnapped!! a Narrative gamification approach to teaching child developmental milestones in physiotherapy education **Anri Human, Marlize Cochrane-Boeyens**	Designing sustainable internationalisation-at- home: lessons from a multi- country virtual exchange in occupational therapy education **Helga E. Lister, Nabeela Kharva, Tania L. Buys, Zainab A. Jasem, Susanne Tellers, Sian Burgess, Stefan Kollman, Sarah L. McGinley, Mike Jarrey**
14:10 - 14:30	Click, connect, engage: digital engagement in online postgraduate learning **Mari van Wyk, Sean Patrick**	Mapping non-linear student progression in extended curriculum programmes: Sankey flow analysis (2017 – 2025) **Jeanine Mwambakana-Mutombo, Thabiso Gumede**	From intervention to insight: evaluating student engagement and behavioural change in an ai remedial course at NWU **Yolande Stewart, Anné Verhoef**
14:30 - 14:45	Closing Session Future Africa Auditorium		

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