



Southern African Association for Institutional Research

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

**27<sup>th</sup> SAAIR Conference 2020**

**24 – 26 November 2020**

**Theme:**

**The New Normal in Higher Education, #ItlsaShift**



Photo from : [elearningindustry.com](http://elearningindustry.com)

Hosted by

**saair**

Southern African Association for Institutional Research

**EXCO**

Virtual Online Event



[www.saair-web.co.za](http://www.saair-web.co.za)



Photo from : Forbes.com

**VENUE : ANYWHERE**



Photo from : Google

**Important dates:**

**The submission deadline for outlines and abstracts is : 15 October 2020**

**Acceptance/revision or rejection: 23 October 2020**

Please send your abstracts and outlines to the SAAIR Office (Carin Strydom) [admin@saair.net](mailto:admin@saair.net) by 15 October 2020.

For accepted contributions, submissions of an electronic copy of the presentation should be sent to the SAAIR office ([admin@saair.net](mailto:admin@saair.net)) not later than **6 November 2020**.

## **WELCOME AND OVERVIEW**

The SAAIR EXCO is hosting the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Southern African Association for Institutional Research (SAAIR) conference virtually. The Conference will be from the 24 to 26 November 2020.

On an annual basis, SAAIR convokes a myriad of scholars, academics and higher education practitioners as well as institutional researchers dedicated to supporting planning, policy formation and decision-making. SAAIR encourages proposals from, and attendance of, all those interested in institutional research, learning analytics, quality assurance, strategic and academic planning, as well as related areas such as teaching-learning and all its associated sub-disciplines and fields of study.

**The SAAIR EXCO is delighted to invite you to submit a proposal for a paper or other type of contribution at the Conference.**

## **Theme: The New Normal in Higher Education, #ItIsaShift**

As Institutional Research Professionals, we are used to the dynamic, highly pressurised environment. We are both pro-active and responsive in our work, and we remain calm, work on being well informed and deal with complexity. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a time of unprecedented change and challenge. Lives are being lost, people are ill, socio-economic wellbeing is at its lowest in decades, and people, including ourselves, are struggling with mental wellness.

The one certain thing is that nothing will ever be the same again. We cannot change or fix everything that is going on, but we have the opportunity to have a massive impact on Higher Education in Southern Africa. Universities have sprinted to adapt to the multiple changes, with a lesser or greater extent. Trying to take the best possible care of students and staff while still providing quality education. We are doing our work with children running around, dishes piling up and washing to do. Pushing our responsiveness and ingenuity to the limit.

This horrible pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to reflect and think of the future when we have a few minutes to do so. We must guard against thinking that things will ever return to the old normal. While the current consequences may be dire, it has provided us with an opportunity to envision the future. 4IR is eventually upon us. We are exploring new ways of assessing students, supporting wellness, working practices, productivity and quality. These are lessons that need to be solidified and be part of our thinking about the future if we return to the same practices as before the pandemic, we would not have learned from it. This learning moves well beyond institutional rivalries and competition, and it is again time to put our combined ingenuity, knowledge and skills together to improve the Higher Education Environment in the New Normal.

You are, therefore, invited to submit an abstract reflecting on your practice at the higher educational, institutional and individual level under any of the following sub-themes:

**Sub-themes:**

**1. Assessment, what do we do now?**

Assessment is a challenge that many academics find daunting. How do we do this online? Can it be done asynchronously? How do we ensure that there isn't copying, plagiarism and cheating of the system? How do we assess and work with qualifications such as hands-on physiotherapy? What works and what doesn't? As Academics, Institutional Research and Higher Education Practitioners, many of us didn't expect to be dealing with this aspect of the academic project. What are good practices in virtual assessment?

**2. Responsiveness and agility to new data and reporting requirements?**

How, when and with what emphasis we collect data has changed drastically. Students are in crisis mode and “Not another survey!” is at the front of their minds. “Why would I spend data and time completing this?” How and what do we ask from them? What is essential to know while remaining cognisant and compassionate to the challenges our students face.

### **3. Letting the syntax talk to us.**

Primary data collection is challenging during this time. How do we use learning analytics now? How do we model when we do not have training data for this situation? Automation has become a major priority. How do we explain and push or pull information to inform decision-making? How can analytics be employed creatively during this time?

### **4. The changing work environment. Everything is good from the waist up.**

This period of change has taken its toll on all staff at HEI's, especially the Academic staff; not only do they have to find a way to work more flexibly, sometimes with a baby on the hip. Anxiety, fear of the unknown and the personal threats of the pandemic has taken its toll on the staff members at HEI's. How can we support remote working? What data are required? How have technical needs been met? How have our learning platforms changed? Higher Education is required for the future, but are Higher Education Institutions still needed? What are good practices in virtual delivery?

## **Information for contributors**

The conference aims to attract institutional research, quality assurance, academic planning professionals, as well as higher education scholars to share their knowledge and expertise in the field of higher education management, with a specific focus on institutional research, management information, business intelligence, quality assurance and enhancement, and statutory reporting, amongst others.

For further information on the Conference theme, please visit [www.saair-web.co.za](http://www.saair-web.co.za).

The following types of contributions will be considered for presentation at the conference:

### **Contributed paper (CP)**

This is a scholarly paper in which the author(s) share research results. Such a paper may draw from a research report, a case study or the use and application of a particular research methodology, or may address particular theoretical and conceptual issues relevant to the theme of the conference. The proposed paper can be based on original data collection or secondary data analysis and can be based on quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodology. Clear evidence of findings is required.

Contributed papers will be scheduled in 30-minute slots of which at least 10 minutes should be dedicated to discussion.

The Exco intends, as a capacity development initiative, to identify the best papers from emerging/young scholars/institutional researchers. This will only focus on Contributed Papers, with the idea of providing some support to convert the best paper(s) into articles for publication.

The submission for this presentation type will thus assist the evaluation committee towards identifying such potential candidates.

### **Panel discussion (PD)**

This is a collegial discussion of a single topic relevant to the theme of the conference by several discussants. The outline for such a presentation should describe the topic and the central issues that will be explored. It should also describe how the differing perspectives of each participant will contribute to the development of the topic. The total time allowed for a discussion panel will be 60 minutes.

### **Pre-conference workshop (CW)**

A workshop should be aimed at facilitating active involvement by participants in deliberations around a topic relevant to the theme of the conference. It should generally consist of a brief introduction followed by planned activities/processes of engagement. The outline for a proposed workshop should describe the topic, the participant activities, the audience that will be targeted through the workshop and its intended outcomes. The outline should also specify any special requirements that may be needed for the workshop (e.g., individual laptops for participation, venue specification, etc.). Please note that such specifications will need to fit in with the overall logistical arrangements for the conference.

### **3-minute pitch presentations (PP)**

This affords an opportunity for early stage or not yet completed research to be presented in an innovative way. Presenters have 3 minutes to give a presentation supported by only THREE slides or ONE poster. Strict time control is exercised, as the intent is to get the importance of the research across to the audience in this short space of time. This will be a session affording the opportunity for question and discussion time for all the relevant presentations. Three-minute pitch presentations can depict research or evaluation findings, or outline a research process.

## Demonstration (D)

A demonstration displays materials related to a project having to do with research or practice. These may include a variety of formats, such as computer programs or multimedia presentations of a project.

## PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of proposals is an important activity in the run-up to the annual conference. The SAAIR Exco remains committed to coordinating the evaluation process in a fair, objective and rigorous manner whilst also considering issues such as the spread of proposals from institutions across Southern Africa and all types of institutions.

In facilitating this, the following should be noted:

1. A panel of experts will be constituted to assess proposals against a pre-determined list of quality criteria (see below).
2. All evaluations are undertaken through a double-blind review process.
3. Where proposals are rated at roughly the same level of quality, the evaluation committee will consider the number of proposals by an individual researcher, and the type of institution to which the individual researcher(s) are affiliated in order to ensure a reasonable spread without neglecting the quality requirements as evaluated by the peer review panel.
4. Contributions that seek to make a scholarly contribution to addressing the theme of the conference will be given first priority of acceptance. However, submissions that do not directly address the theme of the conference will also be considered, provided that they have a clear focus on one or more of the objectives of the SAAIR, namely “to benefit, assist and advance institutional research leading to improved understanding, planning and operation of institutions of higher education”.

## The following criteria will be used to guide the selection of presentations:

### General criteria applicable to all proposals:

- Whether the proposal links to one or more of the SAAIR’s, objectives *namely “to benefit, assist and advance institutional research leading to improved understanding, planning and operation of institutions of higher education”*;
- The degree to which the proposal links to the Conference theme (*Submissions that do not directly address the theme or sub-themes of the conference will also be considered, provided that they have a clear focus on one or more of the objectives of SAAIR*);
- The overall clarity of the proposal (e.g., quality of writing, organisation of ideas, clarity of assumptions, logic of arguments; etc.);
- The importance, significance and relevance of the topic and major issue(s) addressed for institutional research; and



- The potential significance of the contribution.

**Specific criteria applicable to contributed papers:**

- Appropriateness of theoretical or conceptual framework;
- Soundness of research design;
- Appropriateness of data sources or evidence used;
- Clarity of exposition of ideas, analyses, arguments and conclusions; and
- Evidence that the research is near completion and that the paper will be completed by the time of the conference (e.g., preliminary results).

**Specific criteria applicable to panel discussions:**

- Overall focus of the panel discussion and major issues/viewpoints addressed;
- How the collective issues/viewpoints fit together to create a coherent whole;
- How the proposed panel will provide a learning experience of value to delegates; and
- Clarity of exposition of ideas, analyses, arguments and conclusions.

**Specific criteria applicable to pre-conference workshops:**

- Overall focus of the workshop and major issues addressed;
- Soundness of design;
- Appropriateness of data sources or evidence used;
- Clarity of exposition of ideas, analyses, arguments and conclusions to be shared with participants; and

**Specific criteria applicable to 3-minute pitch presentations:**

- Timeliness and general interest regarding the topic;
- Appropriateness of the theoretical and methodological approaches pursued;
- Clarity of exposition of ideas, analyses, arguments and conclusions;
- Preliminary findings, conclusions and implications; and
- Quality of organisation and format of the proposed content.

**Specific criteria applicable to demonstrations:**

- Appropriateness of theoretical or conceptual framework;
- Soundness of design;
- Appropriateness of data sources or evidence used;
- Quality of proposed content;
- Quality of organisation and format of the proposed content.

Please click on the [links](#) below to open the **abstract submission templates**. This needs to be submitted by **15 October 2020** with your documents :

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/30f3b636cd674f6cb2e532add91c53d4>

## SAAIR Submission Template 2020

### Confirmed Keynote speakers :

- **Dr Denyse Webbstock**



**Dr Denyse Webbstock** is the Senior Director: Institutional Planning, Evaluation & Monitoring at University of Johannesburg

- **Dr John Muffo**



Dr John Muffo is the Past President and a Distinguished Member of the Association for Institutional Research in the U.S. He is retired from Virginia Tech where he was Director of Academic Assessment. Currently he is involved in a number of volunteer activities including assisting classes of the Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech to move to Zoom and conducting reviews for the Accrediting Commission for Career Schools and Colleges.

**Vice-Chancellors Panel Discussion Speakers :**

- **Prof Tawana Kupe**



**Professor Tawana Kupe** is the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria since January 2019. He holds a BA Honours and Masters degree in English from the University of Zimbabwe, and a DPhil in Media Studies from University of Oslo, Norway. Prof Kupe is the Africa Co-Chair of the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) since 2019 and an Honorary Doctorate in Humanities was bestowed on him by Michigan State University in December 2019. Prof Kupe has a notable publication record, having authored journal articles, books and book chapters in his main discipline, Media Studies and Journalism. Over the years, Prof Kupe has played a key role in the establishment of select new innovative initiatives at Wits, of which the latest in 2018 the Africa Centre for the Study of the United States. He is an active member of several Civil Society Organisations, including the AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism and is Chairman of the Board of Media Monitoring Africa since 2005. He has been a judge and convenor of multiple major journalism awards in South Africa. He is also the Co-Chairperson of the Kifra Prize Selections Committee coordinated by the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Rwanda from 2020. He serves on the board of a major private company and is a member of Council of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Council.

Professor Kupe is a popular invited speaker, academic expert and regular commentator on issues of media performance on radio, television and the print media in South Africa for local and international media. He has also been a columnist for several newspapers and magazines in South Africa.

- **Dr Bernard N Nthambeleni**



**Dr Ndanduleni Bernard Nthambeleni** is the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda which is situated in Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa.

Dr Nthambeleni is an accomplished and successful executive with more than 22 years' experience in the higher education sector relating to teaching, management, research management & research administration, capacity building programmes, research and development. He possesses a wealth of experience and a breadth knowledge and pertinent experience in the higher education sector.

Dr Nthambeleni previously occupied a senior management position at the National Research Foundation of South Africa as the Executive Director in charge of the Grants Management and Systems Administration directorate

where amongst other he looked after the NRF Online Submission System, Grants Management IT Systems and Pre and Post grant management processes.

Before joining the National Research Foundation, he worked as a Lecturer at the former Vista University East Rand Campus, Johannesburg and a Researcher in the research project sponsored by the South Africa-Netherlands Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD, Amsterdam Human Science Research Council, Kurt Lewin Institute and the Vrije University of Amsterdam.

Dr Nthambeleni obtained a Bachelor's and Honours degree at the then University of Durban Westville in Kwazulu-Natal. He enrolled and completed Master's degree at the then Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg. He obtained a DLitt et Phil degree from the University of Johannesburg.

Dr Nthambeleni served as member of the Project team on Research Infrastructure of the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI) in 2012, member of the University of Venda Council since 2014, member of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences board since 2014, member of the Advisory Board of the InnoVenton/Downstream Chemicals Technology Station, Port Elizabeth, since 2016.

Dr Nthambeleni is also a member of the following professional bodies: Institute of Directors in Southern Africa since 2014, the South African Research & Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) since 2009, the South African Sociological Association (SASA) since 2008 and the International Sociological Association (ISA) since 2007.

**More info regarding the conference :**

Registration for the conference is not open at this stage, but you'll be notified as soon as registration open.