

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION
IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

**CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC
STAFF DEVELOPMENT UNIT**

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE AND ACTING SENIOR DIRECTOR: CILT

I extend a warm welcome to this 2025 edition, and my sincere appreciation to every academic who has walked this journey with us.

As we open the pages of this magazine, I am reminded that academic development is never an abstract idea. It is personal. It is lived in lecture venues, studios, laboratories, and online classrooms. It shows itself in the courage to redesign a module, the humility to listen to student feedback, the discipline to complete a qualification while teaching full time, and the confidence that grows when a colleague realises that their teaching is worthy of scholarship.

Looking back on 2025, we can say with gratitude that it was a year of meaningful progress and visible impact. CASD unit continued to serve as a supportive partner to academics across the institution, advancing professional learning that is grounded in evidence, responsive to our context, and aligned with student success. This magazine captures that story through the voices and profiles of colleagues who participated in our programmes. Their growth, in confidence, capability, scholarly identity and professional recognition, is the clearest indicator that our work matters. When an academic moves from uncertainty to intentional teaching, from isolated practice to community, and from routine delivery to reflective innovation, the institution changes with them.

Our Scholarship of Teaching and Learning initiatives strengthened many colleagues to ask deeper questions about learning, to investigate their practice with rigour, and to share insights that benefit others. Through communities of practice, we witnessed how collegial exchange restores energy and builds practical solutions to common challenges. Industry exposure opportunities also reminded us that curriculum relevance is not achieved by policy statements alone, but through authentic engagement with the world of work, professional standards, and emerging realities that shape graduate success. Alongside this, our Student Feedback on Learning Experiences work helped academics to treat student voice as a resource for improvement, strengthening the alignment between learning design, assessment practices, and the lived realities of our students.

We also celebrate the growing footprint of the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, which continues to nurture thoughtful, research informed educators who can lead teaching and learning with both competence and care. In 2025, the steady rise in digital confidence was equally encouraging. Our AI workshops supported colleagues to understand opportunities and limits, to integrate tools responsibly, and to remain anchored in academic integrity and pedagogical purpose.



DR XOLANI KHOHLISO
CILT: Acting Senior Director's Desk

A special highlight was the AI Short Learning Programmes delivered through collaboration with the University of Stellenbosch and Rhodes University. These partnerships demonstrated what is possible when institutions work together to build capacity that is future focused, ethically grounded, and directly applicable to teaching, learning, assessment and academic work.

To the academics featured in this magazine, thank you for allowing your journeys to be shared. Your stories affirm that professional development is not about perfect performance, but about continual growth, reflective practice, and a willingness to learn in community. You also remind us that the true measure of academic development is not only certificates, outputs or milestones, but the lasting transformation in how we teach, how we support students, and how we see ourselves as university educators and scholars.

As we step into 2026, I wish every academic success, strength and renewed purpose. May this year bring fresh ideas, productive collaborations, and the confidence to try what is new while strengthening what already works. CASD remains committed to walking with you, to creating enabling spaces for learning and scholarship, and to supporting your professional journey in ways that are practical, respectful and meaningful. I invite you to continue participating, to encourage your colleagues to join, and to use the opportunities available to deepen your practice and widen your impact.

May 2026 be a year of growth for you personally, progress for your students, and continued excellence for our institution.



TSHOLOFELLO TSHABADIRA

FROM REFLECTION TO IMPACT: A JOURNEY OF GROWTH, RECOGNITION, AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE

BIO

Ms Tsholofelo Tshabadira is a Lecturer in the Department of Design and Studio Art within the Faculty of Humanities. She teaches Studio Practice, Ideation, and Collaborative Practice in Industry across the National Diploma, Advanced Diploma in Design Technology, and Postgraduate Diploma in Design Technology programmes.

REFLECTION

Receiving the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Early Career Teaching represents both a profound honour and an important affirmation of my journey as an emerging academic. On a personal level, the award evokes deep gratitude and pride. Teaching in higher education demands continuous learning, experimentation, and critical self-reflection, and this recognition affirms that the passion, care, and commitment I invest in student learning are acknowledged and valued. It has strengthened my confidence and renewed my motivation to continue developing as a reflective and student-centred lecturer.

Professionally, the award marks a significant milestone in my academic career. It validates my commitment to innovative and inclusive teaching practices. The recognition enhances my academic profile and creates opportunities for collaboration, curriculum development, mentorship, and broader institutional engagement.

It has also encouraged me to deepen my involvement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as an integral part of my professional trajectory.

Central to this journey has been my enrolment in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, which aligns strongly with the DHET framework for strengthening lecturers as teachers in higher education. The PGDip has been an enabling and empowering journey that has allowed me to engage critically and rigorously with my teaching practice. It has provided the conceptual language and theoretical grounding to articulate, refine, and strengthen pedagogical approaches that I had previously applied intuitively.

Through the PGDip, I have developed a deeper understanding of curriculum development, particularly the importance of alignment, coherence, and responsiveness to diverse student contexts. My approach to assessment has shifted towards designing authentic, developmental, and inclusive assessment practices that support learning rather than merely measuring performance. Engagement with teaching and learning theories has further strengthened my ability to design purposeful learning experiences grounded in higher education pedagogy.

I am looking forward to continuing and completing my PGDip this year, with a focus on research, quality assurance, and expanding my knowledge of online and blended teaching. These areas are critical for strengthening academic standards and responding effectively to a changing higher education landscape. The award serves to augment and affirm the strong foundation laid by the PGDip, demonstrating the value of structured academic development.

I would strongly encourage colleagues to enrol in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, as it is a truly enabling and enriching qualification. I extend my sincere appreciation to CASD and CILT for their continued support and commitment to the professional development of academics at CUT.

**TSEPO MACHELA****WRITING WITH PURPOSE: LESSONS FROM THE SOTL WRITING RETREAT****BIO**

Tsepo Machela is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Business Department. He joined CUT in 2023, bringing with him valuable industry experience from the shipping sector, as well as prior teaching experience in private higher education. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the Durban University of Technology, further strengthening his academic and research profile.

REFLECTION

Participation in the CUT SoTL Writing Retreat provided a valuable opportunity for focused reflection and scholarly growth within a structured and supportive academic environment. The retreat created dedicated time and space to enhance my academic writing through practical strategies, expert facilitation, and sustained engagement with constructive feedback. In particular, the guidance provided by Dr De Preez, as facilitator, offered critical insights into academic writing conventions, enabling me to refine my ideas and strengthen the clarity, coherence, and scholarly rigour of my arguments.

A key outcome of the retreat was the completion of two academic articles, alongside the finalisation of several previously outstanding sections of my work. Equally significant was the collaborative nature of the retreat, which fostered rich scholarly dialogue and exposure to diverse perspectives on writing and knowledge production. These interactions deepened my understanding of scholarly practice and reinforced the value of academic communities of practice.

Beyond immediate research outputs, the impact of the retreat extends into my teaching practice. The writing skills, reflective strategies, and critical engagement cultivated during the retreat are intentionally integrated into my teaching, contributing to improved student engagement and more meaningful knowledge construction. Overall, this experience represents a clear transition from reflection to impact, strengthening both my scholarly identity and my contribution to teaching and learning within the academic community.

**BONGUMUSA KHUSI****ACADEMIC INDUCTION WORKSHOP REFLECTION:****BIO**

Mr Khusi joined the Central University of Technology (CUT) as an nGAP Lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities, within the Mathematics, Science and Technology Education cluster. His academic background is in Chemistry and Chemistry Education, and he is currently pursuing a PhD in the field. He is particularly committed to innovative pedagogical strategies that effectively connect academic theory with real-world workplace application.

REFLECTION

The three-day Induction Workshop provided a purposeful and well-structured pathway that effectively anchored my transition into the Central University of Technology (CUT) and the broader, evolving landscape of higher education. The programme offered a clear and coherent overview of the institution's threefold mandate—Teaching and Learning, Research, and Community Engagement—while also articulating the expectations associated with academic roles and the centrality of academic citizenship within the university community.

Critically, the workshop supported my institutional integration by offering an in-depth understanding of CUT's operational and strategic framework. Engagement with quality assurance policies, governance structures, and student support systems enabled me to contextualise my role within the university's broader mission. As a result, I now experience a stronger sense of belonging—not only within my department, but to the wider institution's strategic objectives.

The most immediate and significant impact of the induction has been a fundamental shift in my approach to curriculum design and teaching practice. I have moved beyond a content-driven model of instruction towards a deliberately student-centred pedagogical approach. My module planning is now more intentional and outcomes-focused, with assessments purposefully aligned to institutional graduate attributes. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of my role in shaping meaningful learning experiences that are responsive, relevant, and aligned with CUT's educational vision.



PAPI LEMEKO

TRANSFORMING ACADEMIC PRACTICE THROUGH AI: A JOURNEY OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

BIO

Mr. Lemeko is a lecturer and Head of the Department of Communication Sciences, with a specialization in Language Practice. His research and publications focus on Intercultural Studies, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and teaching and learning in higher education. His recent publications include *The Influence of Afrikaans on Naming among the Basotho of South Africa*; *Online Teaching and Learning Experiences of Higher Education Lecturers and Students in the COVID-19 Era: A Leap to Digital Pedagogies?*; and *Students' Feedback on Lecturer Online Instruction Competence at a University of Technology*.

REFLECTION

I recently completed the transformative AI training programme, *Practical Approaches to Academic Writing with AI*, which has significantly reshaped my approach to academic research and teaching. This learning experience prompted critical reflection on my scholarly practices and catalysed a purposeful shift towards more efficient, ethical, and impact-driven academic work.

The programme provided in-depth exposure to practical AI applications in academia, including advanced prompting strategies to enhance literature reviews, data analysis, and research proposal development, while foregrounding ethical responsibility. Through hands-on engagement with generative AI tools, I developed the capacity to automate routine academic tasks, personalise learning materials, and support student-centred pedagogical practices. This, in turn, creates space for deeper educator-student engagement and reflective teaching practice. These competencies have had immediate relevance for my work in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) documentation, where AI can now be strategically leveraged to support metadata development and ethically grounded crowdsourcing without compromising scholarly integrity.

A key outcome of the training was a strengthened understanding of AI-enabled ethical compliance, bias mitigation, and collaborative knowledge production through emerging platforms such as AI agents and learning management systems.

This has reinforced my expertise in social sciences research ethics and positioned me to integrate AI transparently within ethnographic research and curriculum design for language practice programmes. I now confidently apply AI tools for idea generation, content structuring, and iterative feedback, enhancing the quality and rigour of my scholarly writing on ICH preservation.

Importantly, the programme's focus on innovative teaching approaches such as adaptive learning pathways and gamified learning experiences has translated into tangible changes in my assessment design and student engagement strategies. By integrating AI-enhanced insights with Afrocentric pedagogical methodologies, I am fostering more inclusive, responsive, and contextually grounded learning environments. Completing this programme and earning the accompanying certificate marks a transition from reflective learning to institutional impact, positioning me to contribute meaningfully to AI adoption initiatives that strengthen research productivity, teaching innovation, and professional development within higher education.



CECILÉ SWART

ENGAGING WITH THE NEW STUDENT FEEDBACK SYSTEM

BIO

Ms Cecilé Swart is a part-time lecturer in the Department of Business Management and the journal administrator for the Journal for New Generation Sciences (JNGS). She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Industrial Psychology.

With nearly seven years of higher education experience, she is committed to academic quality assurance, student success, and advancing scholarship in human resource development, organisational behaviour, publication literacy, and evidence-informed pedagogy.

REFLECTION

As a part-time lecturer in the Department of Business Management and administrator of the Journal for New Generation Sciences, I have long regarded systematic student feedback as indispensable to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). The introduction of the new digital student feedback system has markedly enhanced both the process of gathering feedback and its capacity to inform evidence-based pedagogical refinement.

The administration of the new system proved efficient, unobtrusive, and thoughtfully designed. Invitations distributed to students, anonymity rigorously protected, and individual lecturer reports disseminated promptly upon closure of each data-collection cycle. The deliberate timing of the survey and its explicit framing as a developmental rather than evaluative instrument appeared to foster greater candour and engagement among respondents.

The quality and utility of the data represented a considerable improvement. The new reports integrate quantitative ratings within an accessible dashboard and pair them with detailed qualitative commentary, offering a balanced and contextualised view of teaching practice. This triangulated evidence simultaneously affirmed effective aspects of my pedagogy and illuminated clear areas for development. The constructive insights received have already prompted targeted adjustments, thereby translating student voice into concrete enhancements for the coming academic year.

The new system has thus affected a substantive shift from reflection to impact. By furnishing robust, triangulated evidence of teaching practice together with actionable recommendations, it empowers lecturers to enact precise, data-informed enhancements. More fundamentally, it institutionalises the student voice as a pivotal catalyst for continuous improvement within the academic project. At the Central University of Technology, this instrument has emerged as a powerful enabler of scholarly teaching and the ongoing pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning.

THEME: BECOMING A UNIVERSITY TEACHER THROUGH PGDIPHE



BELINDA BASSON

BIO

Belinda Basson is a lecturer in MST Education at the Central University of Technology. She recently completed her Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, focusing on student-centred pedagogy and curriculum design. Her teaching interests include technology-enhanced learning and academic development. She is passionate about empowering students through reflective and engaging learning experiences.

REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE

Completing the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education has been one of the most transformative milestones in my academic journey. It moved me from simply doing teaching to truly understanding teaching. Through the programme, I developed a stronger professional identity as a university teacher who is reflective, intentional and deeply committed to student learning.

The PGDipHE aligns closely with the National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers by grounding my practice in scholarly, student-centred pedagogy. It strengthened my confidence to design learning experiences that are inclusive, constructive and responsive to diverse student needs. I now approach curriculum design, assessment and feedback with a clearer sense of purpose, ensuring that learning outcomes, activities and assessments are meaningfully aligned.

Within CUT's Continuous Professional Learning Framework, the programme created a powerful space for reflection, experimentation and growth. I was encouraged to question my assumptions, engage with educational theory and apply evidence-based teaching strategies in my own classroom. This process has not only improved my teaching practice but has also deepened my engagement with professional learning communities at the university.

The impact of this learning is already visible in my teaching. My lessons are more structured, interactive and focused on developing higher-order thinking skills. I design assessments that are more authentic and transparent, allowing students to demonstrate their learning in meaningful ways. Feedback has become a learning tool rather than just a grading exercise, and I see students becoming more confident, motivated and engaged in their studies.

Perhaps most importantly, the PGDipHE has helped me see myself as a scholarly teacher who continuously reflects on practice, uses evidence to inform decisions and remains open to innovation. I now intentionally integrate technology, active learning and reflective activities into my teaching to support deeper understanding and student success.

Going forward, I plan to continue applying what I have learned by refining my curriculum design, exploring new pedagogical approaches and mentoring colleagues and students in reflective practice. The shift from reflection to impact is not a single moment, but an ongoing journey; one that the PGDipHE has firmly set in motion for me as a committed and confident university teacher.

THROUGH THE LENS OF THE MENTORS: THE REAL IMPACT OF SOTL AT CUT BY PROF FREDA VAN DER WALT



BIO

Prof Freda van der Walt is the Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Central University of Technology. She is a professor in Organisational Behaviour with a strong interest in academic leadership, and individual behaviour and development. Her work is grounded in reflective practice and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

FROM REFLECTION TO IMPACT

My journey with Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD), and particularly with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), began not by personal choice but through responsibility. When I was appointed as Assistant Dean: Teaching and Learning,

I assumed oversight of the SoTL initiative within the Faculty of Management Sciences, a space that, at the time, was largely underdeveloped. What initially felt like an administrative obligation soon became one of the most significant professional learning experiences of my academic career.

I was skeptical at first. However, as I engaged more deeply with CASD and the SoTL community, I began to appreciate the value of deliberately examining my own teaching practice and approaching it as a scholarly endeavour. The process of critical reflection, supported by mentorship and shared dialogue, helped me understand how thoughtful inquiry into teaching enhances both personal development and student learning. Listening to colleagues share innovative teaching approaches shifted my understanding of what it truly means to be a university teacher.

As this reflective work gained momentum, it began to translate into tangible outcomes within the faculty. We moved from having no meaningful engagement with SoTL to becoming one of the stronger contributors institutionally. Small scholarly groups were established, faculty members actively participated in SoTL programmes and conferences, and CASD workshops and article writing workshops became important spaces for learning and growth. This engagement contributed to improved teaching practices, increased research outputs, and the academic progression of colleagues from junior to senior levels, firmly grounded in SoTL practice.

Today, I am a strong advocate for SoTL. If it were possible, I would like to see every academic within the faculty involved, as I have experienced firsthand the depth of professional development it offers. While not everyone is yet on board, the progress we celebrate is meaningful and visible. SoTL has strengthened the functioning of the faculty and played a defining role in my development as an academic leader.

The guidance and support I received through CASD enabled me to turn reflective practice into action with real impact, a journey that ultimately prepared me for the role of Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences.

A YEAR OF SOTL AT CUT: A REFLECTION BY DR KGOMOTLOKOA LINDA THABA-NKADIMENE



BIO

Dr Thaba-Nkadimene is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational and Professional Studies, Faculty of Humanities. She has 30 years of teaching experience, including 18 years in basic education, where she also served as a school principal. She is a recipient of the Nokotlou Management Team Best Award (2006), conferred by Mr Mokgokong, and the Second-Best University Teacher Award (2016), awarded by Professor Mahlo Mokgalong. Her research interests include Entrepreneurship Education; Human Resources in Higher Education; Business Studies Pedagogy; Teacher Education; and Teachers' Psychological Needs.

REFLECTION

I joined the Central University of Technology (CUT) on 1 October 2024, at a point when my scholarly interests were already aligned with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). CUT provided a strong foundation for advancing my interest in researching my own teaching practice through a SoTL.

I regard CUT as a fertile environment for reflective practice because of its well-established SoTL culture. This includes a structured mentorship system, a diverse community of mentors and mentees, and sustained opportunities for scholarly engagement, most notably through the annual SoTL conference. These structures create a supportive scholarly space in which teaching practice is systematically interrogated, theorised, and shared.

Guided by De Jager, Monnapula-Mapesela and Ntshoe (2017), I engaged in SoTL with the explicit aim of improving my teaching practice within the South African higher education context. As a newcomer to CUT, I actively embraced SoTL. This marked the beginning of a collaborative SoTL journey undertaken with colleagues from CUT and partner institutions across South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

This reflection serves as a scholarly mirror through which I examine my SoTL engagement since assuming duty as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies. My formal induction into CUT's SoTL community took place in November 2024 during a writing retreat, where the objectives, scope, and scholarly expectations of SoTL were introduced. This experience was further strengthened by the January 2025 induction programme, which provided clarity on SoTL as both a scholarly identity and a sustained academic practice.

Participation in SoTL stimulated a deeper commitment to reflective teaching practice and collaborative inquiry. Through SoTL mentorship, I became increasingly involved in structured reflective activities that foreground teaching as a legitimate site of research. This engagement reinforced my scholarly identity as a teacher-educator whose practice is informed by systematic reflection, evidence, and peer dialogue.

Central to this journey has been the sustained mentorship, collaborative writing, and critical peer review, these initiatives generated research outcomes that exceeded initial expectations. The initiatives catalysed multi-institutional collaboration and culminated in the development of two edited books currently under review, with anticipated publication in 2026, and a further two additional volumes projected for publication in 2027.

The transformative strength of SoTL lies in its collaborative mentoring model. Contributors were supported to reconceptualise their reflective teaching inquiries into rigorous scholarly outputs in the form of book chapters. The presence of a strategically organised mentoring and review team was instrumental in guiding novice academics and postgraduate students through the processes of reflective inquiry, academic writing, and SoTL publication.

In conclusion, this reflective essay highlights the transformative impact of SoTL. The project not only strengthened reflective teaching practice but also generated substantial scholarly outputs, with significant contributions from CUT academics. These outcomes affirm the value of SoTL as a vehicle for professional growth, collaborative scholarship, and the advancement of teaching and learning in higher education.



BIO

Dr Phage is a Senior Lecturer in Physics and Science Education in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (MSTE) at CUT. His research interests focus on the teaching and learning of Physics, Science, and Mathematics, in which he has published extensively. He teaches at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and also supervises postgraduate students.

REFLECTION

The Industrial Exposure (IE) visit undertaken in December 2024 constituted a strategically significant intervention that directly informed and strengthened subsequent curriculum development and community engagement initiatives. From the perspective of fostering collaboration with the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) through their Collateral Benefits Programme, an initiative centred on outreach and community engagement—the visit provided critical insights into best practices for integrating industry expertise with educational and societal impact. These insights were systematically translated into practical applications that enhanced both academic programming and community-facing activities.

As a direct outcome of the IE visit, collaboration with key stakeholders was substantially strengthened, notably with the Free State Department of Basic Education and the Teachers Association of the Free State and Botswana (TABSA). This enhanced partnership culminated in a series of high-impact initiatives. These included a Grades 6–9 Teacher Development Workshop on Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Robotics, and Coding held in July 2025; targeted professional development and training on the pedagogies of Scientific Investigation for Grade 10 Life Sciences teachers in November 2025; and active stakeholder participation in the Mathematics and Language Family Day at Mangaung Primary Schools. The latter, an initiative of the Mangaung Metropolitan Education District, successfully engaged learners, educators, and community members in meaningful learning experiences.

The overarching objective of these initiatives reinforced through the December 2024 IE visit—was to support the recruitment, retention, and progression of learners within Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Innovation (STEMI) education and related career pathways. Through capacitated teachers, learners were exposed to a broad spectrum of STEMI disciplines and career opportunities, while simultaneously developing entrepreneurial skills aligned with contemporary industry demands. Collectively, these efforts aimed to empower learners to pursue sustainable livelihoods and contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of their communities, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, teachers and officials from DBE were encouraged and capacitated to initiate academic and industrial tours for learners, thereby enhancing curriculum relevance and strengthening alignment with real-world industrial requirements within STEM education. These educators and officials were also motivated to engage in research activities and to leverage institutional resources available through the Central University of Technology (CUT), further reinforcing a culture of inquiry and evidence-based practice.

Key lessons derived from the IE visits to SAAO and SALT further highlighted the importance of integrating STEM education with community engagement through the establishment of Science Clubs within the curriculum. This model promotes experiential, hands-on learning while enabling the assessment of learners' conceptual understanding and social interaction beyond the confines of the classroom. Science Clubs serve as a powerful mechanism for stimulating sustained interest in STEM among young people, ensuring an effective balance between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Ultimately, this approach enhances learners' readiness for real-world STEM challenges and strengthens their critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities. Finally, the alignment of academic programmes with current industry practices—channelled back to CUT through the Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education (MSTE) Department—will continue to enrich programme offerings and assessment strategies. This alignment supports more robust evaluation of students' STEMI competencies in relation to industry needs and advances national priorities focused on skills development, innovation, and the upskilling of communities towards self-sustaining development.



11TH SOTL CONFERENCE REFLECTION FROM THE LOC MEMBER



BIO

Dr Nape Phahlamohlaka is a lecturer in Radiography in the Department of Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences. He holds a Doctor of Radiography degree from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Dr Phahlamohlaka has served in both public and private healthcare sectors as a Radiation Therapist, through which he has gained valuable clinical experience within oncology settings.

REFLECTION

A key highlight of my contribution to the 11th SoTL Conference was introducing Professor Charles Maimela as the Day 2 keynote speaker, an honour that reflected my active involvement in the conceptual and preparatory phases of the conference. In preparing his introduction, I engaged closely with his influential scholarship in Medical Law, African Customary Law, and curriculum transformation. His work consistently challenges academics to rethink how knowledge is constructed, contextualised, and taught within South African higher education, particularly in ways that respond meaningfully to historical inequities and contemporary realities.

Professor Maimela's keynote address resonated strongly with the conference theme, calling for curriculum transformation grounded in social justice and inclusivity to achieve sustainable and meaningful impact. He further challenged higher education institutions to reclaim the core identity of students as learners rather than clients, cautioning against the marketisation of education. He emphasised that teaching and learning must remain anchored in authentic educational purpose and academic integrity, with lecturers taking a leading role in shaping pedagogical practices that prioritise critical engagement, scholarly rigour, and the transformative mandate of higher education.

The conference also yielded valuable insights that inform recommendations for future SoTL engagements. The decolonisation workshop proved to be highly educational and underscored the importance of creating dedicated spaces for deep, critical dialogue; its continuation in future conferences is therefore strongly recommended. To enhance focus and maximise impact, the conference programme could be streamlined into two days, allowing for more intentional engagement with carefully selected, high-impact themes. Greater coherence and reflective depth could also be achieved by incorporating rapporteur sessions at the conclusion of each session within individual venues, enabling participants to consolidate key insights while discussions remain current.

Recognising scholarly excellence emerged as another important consideration

Introducing an awards programme in 2026 would serve to acknowledge outstanding contributions, including best oral presentations per theme and the best published research paper produced during the 2025/2026 cycle. Engagement around poster presentations could further be strengthened by consolidating them into a single, dedicated session to improve visibility and interaction.

Together, these reflections underscore the importance of intentional design, academic care, and institutional responsiveness in shaping future SoTL conferences with enduring impact.

2025 SOTL MENTEE AWARD WINNER



BIO

Mpho Mbele is a Lecturer and Departmental Manager in the Department of Information Technology within the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology. She teaches Technical Programming III, with a focus on mobile application development, and coordinates Work-Integrated Learning. She holds an MSc in Information Technology and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. Her research interests include artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, environmental sustainability, and teaching and learning practice.

REFLECTION

Reflecting on my teaching journey, I recognise the profound influence of my mentor, Professor Swart, and the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD) in shaping me into a more confident and purposeful academic. Through his mentorship, I came to understand that lecturing extends far beyond the delivery of content; it is a scholarly craft, one that can be shared, refined, and systematically researched. Prior to this guidance, I had not imagined that my teaching practices could meaningfully contribute to scholarship through publication.

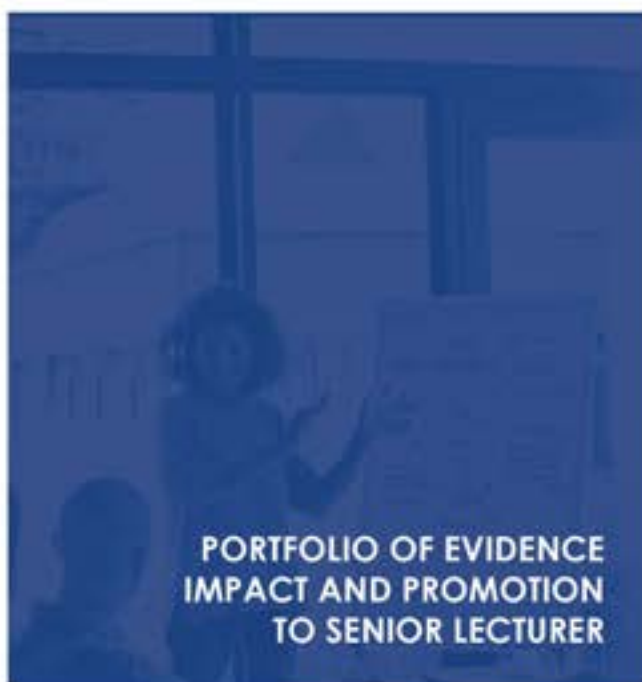
Professor Swart consistently encouraged me to share my assessment strategies, classroom practices, and reflective insights openly. He helped me recognise that everyday teaching moments carry scholarly value when grounded in sound theory. His mentorship was deeply practical: he conducted peer evaluations with me, guided my reflective processes, and modelled more effective ways of engaging students. Through this close support, I learned humility, accountability, and the importance of intentional preparation. As a result, I began to view teaching not as routine work, but as a form of service grounded in purpose and care.

Completing the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education further deepened my academic practice. I began to intentionally link classroom activities to educational theory, curriculum alignment, and student-centred learning principles. This shift made my teaching more deliberate, reflective, and confident. Teaching was no longer simply something I did; it became something I studied, refined, and continuously developed.

CASD played a central role in my development as a scholar, not merely a lecturer in title. Through their workshops, writing retreats, and peer-learning spaces, I was challenged to reflect critically, to write with intention, and to think more deeply about my academic identity. The culture fostered by CASD promotes accountability and excellence, encouraging decisions grounded in theory, evidence, and meaningful reflection. These spaces enabled me to see that my teaching practice holds the potential to create impact beyond the confines of my classroom.

With CASD's support and my mentor's guidance, I was able to publish my work in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, an achievement I had never envisaged at the start of my journey. Receiving the SoTL mentee distinction award was not merely a recognition, but a powerful affirmation that with the right support structures, one can grow far beyond initial expectations.

Ultimately, my journey has been defined by growth, humility, and service. Through the guidance of my mentor and the sustained support of CASD, I have moved from quiet practice to confident impact, becoming an academic not only in title, but in purpose, commitment, and practice.



BIO

Dr Rotondwa Nemakhavhani is a Senior Lecturer and industry specialist in the Built Environment, with experience across teaching, research supervision, curriculum development, and academic mentorship. Drawing on both academic and construction industry expertise, his work bridges theory and practice. His research focuses on sustainable construction, circular economy transitions, and innovative built-environment business models, with a strong commitment to SDG-aligned, community-engaged, and transformative teaching.

REFLECTION

My promotion to Senior Lecturer represents a significant milestone in my academic journey which was strongly shaped and supported by the work of the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD) office. As I reflect on this achievement, the foundational knowledge, structured guidance, and professional tools I gained through the CASD academic PoE workshop played an instrumental role in transforming my reflections into tangible academic impact.

The PoE workshop provided more than a set of guidelines; it offered a clear roadmap for articulating my academic identity with confidence and precision. Last year's PoE workshop sessions helped me better understand what constitutes strong evidence of teaching, research, and community engagement excellence. This clarity became crucial when revisiting and expanding my Portfolio of Evidence in preparation for my application for promotion. I was able to reorganise my narrative to highlight my growth, pedagogical innovation, research productivity, and community-oriented contributions in a manner that aligned directly with institutional expectations.

CASD's ongoing guidance and feedback throughout this process was equally invaluable. The structured templates provided, particularly for teaching and research portfolios, helped me present my achievements coherently and professionally. The credit-calculation session demystified an area I previously found complex, allowing me to accurately map my academic activities to the CUT Promotion Framework. This understanding not only strengthened the credibility of my PoE but also ensured that every contribution from postgraduate supervision and curriculum development to scholarly publications and industry collaboration were represented accurately and comprehensively.

The impact of this support is undeniable. By applying the workshop principles and CASD tools, I was able to demonstrate a holistic academic trajectory grounded in excellence, transformation, and alignment with CUT's vision. These refinements directly supported the successful approval of my promotion to Senior Lecturer, affirming the value of reflective practice when guided by a supportive developmental ecosystem.

To colleagues preparing for future PoE workshops, I encourage you to be intentional and embrace the process wholeheartedly. The CASD workshops are not merely administrative steps or tick-box exercises, but they are developmental spaces that sharpen your academic narrative and enhance your confidence in evidencing your contributions. Engage actively, use the tools provided, ask questions, and revisit your reflections often. Most importantly, recognise that your PoE is not just a document but a story of your growth, impact, and academic identity.

My journey from reflection to impact was made possible through this partnership with CASD, and I am grateful for the role it played in shaping this important milestone in my career.



DOING SOTL DIFFERENTLY: REFLECTION, RECKONING, AND RENEWAL AT THE 11TH INTERNATIONAL SOTL CONFERENCE



The 11th International Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) was nothing short of a scholarly spectacle. Delegates from diverse disciplines and contexts, both within and beyond South Africa, were immersed in three intellectually enriching days of rigorous academic engagement. Anchored by keynote speakers from varied backgrounds, the conference unfolded as a purposeful and reflective journey shaped by the theme, *"Doing SoTL Differently: Impactful and Relevant for Lived Realities—Igniting Inclusivity and New Theories."* Rather than presenting isolated papers, the programme wove together intersecting voices that collectively challenged academics to reimagine teaching as inquiry, ethics, and lived practice.

The opening keynote, delivered by Professor Charles Maimela, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Johannesburg, invited participants to reconceptualise teaching as a scholarly endeavour.

Drawing on cultural-historical perspectives, the conference foregrounded classrooms as complex systems where reflection, evidence, and context intersect. Teaching was framed not as transmission, but as discovery—an ongoing scholarly practice enriched through mentorship, collaboration, and a willingness to learn from tension and contradiction. Delegates were reminded that meaningful transformation often begins beyond the boundaries of comfort.

The second day shifted the discourse from reflection to reckoning. Professor Hassan, Director for Learning, Teaching and Student Success at the University of the Western Cape, positioned curriculum transformation as a moral imperative rather than a bureaucratic or administrative exercise. Speakers urged participants to confront historical amnesia and to resist technocratic approaches to education that privilege compliance over conscience.

By rejecting the “factory model” of learning, the conference called on academics to cultivate critical consciousness, social justice, and intellectual courage, emphasising that teaching for the future demands an honest and critical engagement with the past.

The final keynote turned the conversation toward renewal. Professor Makhoahle, from the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences at CUT, challenged participants to ground SoTL in lived realities by privileging contextually rooted and Africanised approaches to teaching and learning. Emphasis was placed on presence, human connection, and ethical responsibility, even as institutions increasingly engage with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. The keynote argued that innovation must remain principled, ensuring that quality assurance frameworks retain a distinctly human soul.

Across the three days, a shared horizon emerged. Reflection evolved into inquiry, memory into responsibility, and renewal into action. Collectively, the voices of the conference affirmed SoTL not merely as a field or methodology, but as a movement—one that reclaims teaching as a profoundly human, ethical, and transformative practice.

DOING SOTL DIFFERENTLY: IMPACTFUL AND RELEVANT

Under the theme “*Doing SoTL Anew*”, the 11th Annual International Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) fully embodied its guiding vision. The conference culminated in a prestigious Gala Dinner that transcended a conventional social gathering. Rather than merely an evening of fine dining, the event served as a celebration of excellence in SoTL and an opportunity to honour individuals who have made significant contributions to advancing scholarship in teaching and learning.

The Gala Dinner was attended by distinguished guests, including Ms Dibolelo Mance, Free State MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure, and Dr Choice Makhetha, Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal at CUT. During the ceremony, three awards were presented: Excellence in Mentorship, Mentee Distinction, and Community of Practice Merit, each recognising outstanding contributions to SoTL scholarship.



BEST MENTEE AWARD



MEC Mance, Ms Mbele, and Dr Makhetha

Ms Mpho Mbele, a lecturer and departmental manager, received the Best Mentee Award for 2025. In the same year, Ms Mbele co-authored and published two SoTL articles with her mentor. At the time of the conference, one additional article was under review, while another had already been accepted for publication, demonstrating her growing scholarly footprint in the field.

EXCELLENCE IN MENTORSHIP



Photo 2: MEC Mance, Prof Schlebusch, and Dr Qumbisa. (Award accepted by Dr N Qumbisa in absence of Prof van der Walt)


The Excellence in Mentorship Award was conferred on Professor Freda van der Walt, Assistant Dean: Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Management Sciences. Despite the demands of her administrative role, Professor van der Walt actively mentored five academics during 2025. This mentorship resulted in one co-authored journal publication and two international conference presentations, underscoring her commitment to developing emerging scholars.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MERIT



MEC Mance, Prof Nkoane, and Mr Nemutshili

The third award of the evening, Community of Practice Merit, was presented to Professor Molebatsi Nkoane from the Faculty of Humanities. Professor Nkoane was recognised for his leadership in promoting inclusivity in education through community-of-practice initiatives. His work yielded three conference presentations with different co-authors and a collaboratively authored book chapter.



Each award recipient received a cash prize of R10 000 marking a first for a SoTL conference at CUT. In congratulating the winners, Dr Xolani Khohliso, Head of SoTL and Acting Senior Director of CILT, commended them for their dedication and scholarly excellence. He noted that the strong participation of young academics in SoTL initiatives reassured him of a promising future for SoTL at CUT, affirming a renewed commitment to researching teaching and learning in innovative ways.

Professor Khelsha, Deputy Chairperson of the local organising committee and Assistant Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, reflected on the special issue from the previous conference. This special issue was hosted by the Journal of Inquiry-Based Activities (JIBA), under the theme "A Decade of Embracing Theory and Practice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning", where 34 submissions were received. After a rigorous double-blind peer review process, only 14 were accepted and published. Papers published on this special issue focused on embracing the curriculum in praxis and provided some alternative pedagogic strategies to improve learning and teaching.

In keeping with the conference's emphasis on doing things differently, the Gala Dinner also featured an intellectually stimulating address by Professor Siphamandla Zondi, Director for Pan-African Thought and Conversation at the University of Johannesburg. Professor Zondi engaged attendees on the critical issue of decolonising higher education through SoTL. Building on insights from the conference's keynote speakers, he emphasised the importance of centring African philosophies and moving beyond dominant Western paradigms. Echoing Professor Maimela, he argued that meaningful transformation or decolonisation often begins beyond the boundaries of comfort.

The celebration of exemplary mentors and mentees, the rich intellectual engagement, and the strengthening of scholarly communities collectively signalled a SoTL culture that is growing in confidence, depth, and influence. As CUT continues to support emerging scholars and advance research-informed teaching and learning, the SoTL programme stands as a beacon of institutional transformation, academic excellence, and a shared commitment to shaping the future of higher education.



INNOVATING REFLECTION, ADVANCING IMPACT: THE RAPPORTEUR MODEL AT THE 11TH SOTL CONFERENCE

The 11th Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Conference introduced rapporteurs in its sessions. Positioned as intellectual listeners and synthesisers, rapporteurs played a pivotal role in ensuring that the depth, texture, and complexity of each session were not only captured but converted into coherent insights that could inform the conference's broader conversations on all themes, in all sessions throughout the conference.

Their presence brought an added layer of richness to the conference, while presenters focused on presenting and discussing research and participants engaged in discussion, rapporteurs attentively traced the flow of ideas, tensions, questions, and emerging themes. This sharpened the clarity and coherence of sessions' reflections, enabling the conference to move beyond isolated presentations toward integrated, cross-cutting dialogue. In many sessions, rapporteurs' summaries helped uncover connections between disciplines, highlighted recurring challenges, and gave visibility to new conceptual trends that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Their reflective contributions enriched plenary discussions and enhanced the overall intellectual rhythm of the conference.

The introduction of the rapporteurs' role was not only innovative, but it was meaningful and necessary. SoTL conferences often generate an overwhelming volume of knowledge, yet without systematic documentation, much of this intellectual labour dissipates once sessions conclude.

By anchoring discussions in written and synthesised reflections, rapporteurs ensured that insights were preserved, debated, and potentially transformed into future research directions or institutional practices. Their work strengthened SoTL's commitment to cultivating a reflective, research-informed academic community where knowledge is not just presented but thoughtfully curated.

What this innovation ultimately revealed is a great deal about evolving SoTL culture, where the willingness of presenters and participants alike to embrace the rapporteur model signalled a collective shift that is aimed toward intentional reflection, scholarly accountability, and a recognition that our learning thrives when it is documented, shared, and interrogated. The experience demonstrated that CUT is developing a more mature SoTL ecosystem: one that values collaboration, reflexive practice, and rigorous knowledge stewardship.

Even with initial challenges, the rapporteur initiative proved that CUT is ready to experiment with new scholarly practices that deepen engagement and elevate the intellectual quality of its teaching and learning discourse. The 2025 11th SoTL conference, therefore, stands as a testament to a growing culture that does more than generate ideas; it captures them, learns from them, and uses them to catalyse meaningful impact across the institution.



INDUSTRY EXPOSURE 2024 REFLECTION AND IMPACT

REFLECTION

In 2025, I embarked on an industry exposure programme at Jonker Sailplanes (Pty) Ltd in Potchefstroom, aimed at strengthening partnerships between academia and industry. Through the CUT industry exposure initiative supported by CASD in CILT, I gained valuable insights into the operational realities of the aircraft manufacturing sector. The experience reaffirmed that while academic institutions can conduct research independently, meaningful and sustained impact requires close collaboration with industry partners. This engagement exemplified the theme From Reflection to Impact, underscoring the idea that real-world industry challenges are most effectively addressed through joint efforts between academic institutions and industry.

A key reflection from this experience is the complementary nature of academia and industry. Industry seeks immediate, practical, and scalable solutions, while academic institutions contribute high-quality products, processes, and innovation through structured research and development mechanisms. When aligned, these strengths enable more rapid, relevant, and sustainable impact.

My lecturing theme for 2026, Bridging the Gap between Industry and Academia to Accelerate Impact, is directly informed by this experience. In alignment with this theme, I plan to integrate the aviation knowledge gained during the industry exposure into the mechanical engineering curriculum at both undergraduate and honours levels. This initiative builds on existing master's and doctoral research in mechanical engineering supported by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) through the Collaborative Programme in Additive Manufacturing (CPAM). Collectively, these efforts are directed towards qualifying additive manufacturing to produce aircraft structural components.

The integration of additive manufacturing and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies into the mechanical engineering curriculum is intended to empower students to address real-world engineering challenges while equipping them with advanced digital product development skills required in the modern manufacturing sector.



BIO

Dr Lehlohonolo Francis Monaheng is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering within the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (FEBIT). He is a strong proponent of continuous, innovation-driven research, with research interests that include numerical modelling, design for additive manufacturing, aircraft structural components, and medical implants.

Graduates entering industry will be better positioned to contribute to improved accessibility, operational efficiency, and innovative product and service development across the manufacturing value chain.

Ultimately, this experience reinforces the view that meaningful innovation is grounded in strong, purposeful partnerships between academia and industry, where shared expertise translates reflection into tangible impact.



CASD IMPACT AND PROMOTION TO SENIOR LECTURER



BIO

Dr LG Mokoena is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Tourism and Event, Faculty of Management Sciences. He holds a PhD in Tourism Management. Dr Mokoena is also a recipient of the Vice Chancellor's Excellence Award for Mid-career teaching.

REFLECTION

Having begun my career at CUT as a lecturer's assistant and subsequently progressing to junior lecturer, lecturer, and now senior lecturer, I have been a direct beneficiary of the institution's "grow your own timber" philosophy. This steady advancement in my academic career would not have been possible without the staff development support provided through structures such as the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD).

One of the most critical tools for academic career progression is the Portfolio of Evidence (PoE). Attending a PoE workshop organised by the CASD was instrumental in enabling me to compile a sound and comprehensive portfolio. The workshop equipped me with key components required in a PoE, including the development of a teaching philosophy, scholarly teaching practices, peer and student feedback, curriculum development, and mentorship. These fundamentals not only enhanced my understanding of what constitutes a strong PoE but also gave me the confidence and flexibility to structure my portfolio in a way that accurately reflects and documents my teaching methodologies. Although a PoE may appear to focus primarily on accomplishments, the workshop emphasised the importance of also acknowledging personal areas for development to ensure a balanced and authentic portfolio.

With the guidance gained from the PoE workshop, I was able to engage in meaningful introspection and gain a deeper appreciation for the trajectory of my mid-career journey in academia. I effectively evaluated my teaching practices in relation to both my teaching philosophy and CUT's graduate attributes. My PoE served as a valuable tool in preparing for my presentation at the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards and was equally critical in my successful promotion from lecturer to senior lecturer. While both achievements required several contributing factors, I firmly believe that a well-constructed PoE is a powerful integrative tool that brings together the various elements of one's academic career.

I strongly encourage colleagues to take advantage of the workshops organised by CASD, particularly those seeking to advance their academic careers.



CASD COLLABORATES WITH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

REFLECTION

The collaboration between the Curriculum & Academic Staff Development (CASD) within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) and the Training and Development Office reflects a shared commitment to the holistic development of the entire Central University of Technology (CUT) community. The Training and Development Office is strategically positioned as a key partner in supporting institutional capacity building by providing inclusive training and development opportunities for all employees. This approach is underpinned by the understanding that academic success is a collective endeavour, reliant not only on academic staff, but also on the vital contributions of support services such as cleaning staff, security personnel, and other operational teams.

It was this inclusive and collaborative ethos that motivated the Training and Development Office to partner with CASD to support a series of workshops aimed at capacitating academic staff on various aspects of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This partnership played a pivotal role in strengthening digital capability across the institution through the co-design and support of AI training workshops. As a result, academic staff were able to access high-quality, practical learning sessions that deepened their understanding of emerging technologies and enhanced their confidence in applying AI tools within teaching and learning contexts. The financial support provided by the Training and Development Office ensured broader participation and enabled the continuous refinement of workshop content to better address academic needs.

Beyond skills development, this collaboration has contributed to fostering a culture of innovation at CUT. Academic staff are now better equipped to integrate AI responsibly, ethically, and creatively into their modules. By jointly delivering these workshops, the Training and Development Office reaffirmed its commitment to capacity building and future-focused professional development. The positive feedback received from participants underscores the value of this collaborative model and reinforces the importance of sustained investment in digital literacy initiatives.



BIO

Ms Kelebogile Sebudi is a highly experienced Skills Development Facilitator with over 15 years of experience in training and development. Her strong leadership and sustained commitment to advancing institutional skills development have enabled the university to secure grants that support a wide range of training and development initiatives. She also coordinates and oversees internships for CUT graduates and learnerships for unemployed youth, thereby expanding access to meaningful and impactful skills development opportunities. In addition, she ensures full compliance with stakeholder requirements and upholds high standards in training administration, including the compilation and submission of Workplace Skills Plans and Annual Training Reports.

These efforts directly advance the university's strategic objectives of enhancing teaching excellence and driving digital transformation, while strengthening institutional competitiveness through technology-enabled learning.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Dr Khohliso for his visionary leadership and his willingness to go the extra mile in support of staff development. I also wish to acknowledge Mr Earnest Mpindo for his efficient administration of the AI workshops, as well as the broader CASD team for their dedication and collaborative spirit. Importantly, this partnership marks not an endpoint but a foundation for continued collaboration. Several joint projects are already envisioned beyond 2025, reaffirming the long-term commitment of both units to advancing professional development and innovation at CUT.



BECOMING A CURRICULUM CHAMPION: LESSONS AND IMPACT



BIO

Dr Bianca Mkhize-Simelane is a Lecturer in Tourism and Event Management and holds a PhD, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. Her research interests focus on sustainability and entomophagy tourism, with particular emphasis on addressing food insecurity in South Africa. She is a certified Assessor and Moderator and possesses strong expertise in tourism systems. Through her academic and professional work, Dr Mkhize-Simelane actively promotes eco-tourism and sustainable practices that support inclusive community development.

REFLECTION

My journey as a Curriculum Champion began with uncertainty. When I assumed the role, I was not fully aware of its scope or significance, and I initially viewed it as an added responsibility rather than a position of strategic influence. After the first meeting, my understanding shifted considerably.

I came to recognise that the role existed not for personal benefit but to strengthen curriculum processes within my faculty and to serve as a bridge between the faculty and CASD. This realisation marked the beginning of a more intentional engagement with curriculum work.

Over time, my contributions became more visible, particularly within my department. Colleagues increasingly approached me when developing Short Learning Programmes or seeking clarity on curriculum matters, which signalled growing trust in my capacity to provide guidance. Although some faculty members continued to develop curricula without consultation, the gradual recognition of the role has enhanced the flow of information and improved responsiveness to curriculum governance processes. The workshops I facilitated on Short Learning Programme design, together with the insights gained from institutional and national training sessions, contributed to more informed curriculum discussions and strengthened academic confidence among staff.

The training opportunities I attended played a critical role in shaping my academic practice. Engagements such as the Short Learning Programme Forum Colloquium, the Curriculum Renewal Innovation programme, and the Siyaphumelela Working Sessions broadened my perspective on curriculum transformation, data-informed decision-making, and sector-wide trends. These experiences equipped me with practical tools that I applied in my faculty, particularly in strengthening student feedback processes and supporting colleagues in curriculum planning and review.

The role has had a substantial impact on my academic identity. It has positioned me as an active contributor to curriculum leadership and has expanded the scope of my academic responsibilities. Serving as a resource to colleagues, facilitating curriculum-related discussions, and participating in broader institutional initiatives have shaped a deeper sense of professional agency. The recognition that followed, including my appointment as Chairperson of the Curriculum Committee, affirmed the trajectory of growth initiated through this role.

Looking ahead, I aim to continue building influence by promoting stronger curriculum governance structures, encouraging consistent staff engagement, and expanding the faculty's participation in curriculum renewal initiatives. With continued training and growing recognition within the faculty, I plan to strengthen collaborative practices and contribute to more sustainable curriculum enhancement efforts. Through this ongoing work, I hope to deepen the impact of the Curriculum Champion role in ways that advance academic quality and institutional transformation.



STRENGTHENING CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION: A PARTNERSHIP TRANSFORMING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



BIO

Leani van Heerden is the Deputy Director in the e-Learning and Educational Technology Unit within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT). Her academic interests focus on making learning management system (LMS) training and instructional design both engaging and effective, with the aim of strengthening lecturers' attitudes towards, and competencies in, online learning to ultimately enhance the student learning experience. Drawing on her background in visual art and design, she brings a distinctive integration of aesthetics and pedagogy to her work, leveraging educational technologies creatively and purposefully to support teaching excellence and promote student success.

REFLECTION

As Artificial Intelligence continues to reshape higher education globally, institutions are increasingly challenged to prepare academics for a new era of teaching, learning, and assessment. At the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), this challenge has been transformed into an opportunity, driven by collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to academic excellence. Through the utilisation of our UCDG grant, the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD) unit, in collaboration with the eLearning Unit, delivered two groundbreaking AI-focused workshops for academics on both the Bloemfontein and Welkom campuses. These sessions were facilitated by leading experts from University of Johannesburg (UJ) and University of FortHare (UFH).

Dr Vusumzi Funda, a senior lecturer from FHU, focused on how academics can leverage AI to design and grade assessments ethically and responsibly. Drawing on practical examples, Dr Funda reminded participants that "AI is a means to an end, not a means to end; academics remain responsible for every grade they assign." In contrast, Dr Carina van Rooyen, Senior Manager at the Centre for Academic Technologies at UJ, encouraged academics to move beyond fear and compliance, and instead engage with AI through creativity, curiosity, and critical reflection. Her exploration of post-humanist learning design challenged participants to reconsider who—or what—participates in teaching and learning, and in what ways.

The success of the AI SLP workshops demonstrates what becomes possible when university units break down silos and collaborate for meaningful institutional impact. Together, these efforts have generated momentum that extends well beyond the workshops themselves. The conversations, professional networks, and pedagogical shifts initiated during these sessions are already influencing curriculum design, assessment practices, academic writing, and disciplinary engagement across CUT.

BECOMING A CURRICULUM CHAMPION: LESSONS AND IMPACT



BIO

Dr Thandi Patricia Gumede is a Senior Lecturer and serves as the Curriculum Champion for the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences. She holds a PhD in Polymer Science, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. She is a National Research Foundation (NRF) Y2-rated researcher and a TAU participant. Her research interests focus on the development of sustainable polymer nanocomposites, utilising biodegradable matrices reinforced with cellulose nanocrystals (CNCs) extracted from diverse natural feedstocks, including medicinal plants, agricultural residues, and marine bio-waste.

REFLECTION

When I started as a Curriculum Champion for the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences at CUT, I saw the role primarily as representational, serving as a link between my faculty and CASD. Over the past year, my understanding has deepened into a more strategic and active function, involving coordination, support, and academic leadership.

My work has influenced curriculum processes and teaching across the faculty in several ways. I developed a standardized study guide template now fully adopted across departments, streamlining module revisions and improving consistency. I delivered a session on Designing Effective Assessment and Rubrics during the Academic Staff Induction Programme, equipping colleagues with practical tools for assessment alignment and rubric design. I also coordinated curriculum and academic staff development needs for 2026, liaising with HoDs and departments, consolidating submissions for the AD:T&L. Additionally, my strategies to enhance student feedback, which led to the highest response rate in Semester 1 in my faculty, were shared as best practice for faculty colleagues in Semester 2, demonstrating the tangible impact of reflective teaching practices. I reviewed Short Learning Programmes (SLPs) in Higher Education at CUT and participated in Siyaphumelela Workstream 3, supporting student success monitoring. I also assisted in addressing feedback from CHE on SAQA forms and contributed to Task Team 2: IPQE inputs for the Draft SER, strengthening quality assurance processes. Furthermore, I was appointed to the BSc Hydrology programme task team, where I supported the programme's transition from FEBIT to FHES and ensured alignment with faculty and institutional standards.

Training opportunities have strengthened my academic practice. Completing SI Supervisor Training enhanced my ability to mentor SI Leaders and support student learning effectively. Facilitating a book discussion on Perspectives on Curriculum as Praxis created space for reflective engagement with pedagogy and curriculum theory, fostering scholarship among colleagues.

This role has shaped my academic identity profoundly. It has expanded my leadership capacity, strengthened my curriculum expertise, and built my confidence in guiding colleagues toward better teaching, learning, and curriculum practices.

Looking forward, I plan to continue enhancing communication structures, supporting curriculum processes, and contributing to sustainable academic practices. I aim to build a collaborative culture in the faculty and ensure that curriculum initiatives remain student-centred, innovative, and impactful.



BUILDING BRIDGES: REFLECTIONS ON A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN COMPUTER NETWORKING



BIO

Ntombizanele (Zanele) Maqache is a lecturer in the Department of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering at the Central University of Technology, Free State, where she teaches and conducts research in renewable energy systems, the Internet of Things, and engineering education. She holds a Master of Engineering degree, and she has published in international journals and conferences on both solar energy applications and innovative approaches to laboratory reporting in engineering education. She is also an NRF Thuthuka grand holder and an active contributor to student learning and outreach initiatives.

REFLECTION

When I initiated the Industry Partners Engagement: Enhancing Computer Networks Competency in the Age of AI, my primary intention was simple yet ambitious: to create a sustainable Community of Practice (CoP) that meaningfully connects academia and industry. I envisioned a collaborative space where lecturers, industry professionals, alumni, and employers could engage in honest dialogue about the evolving demands of the networking field and how higher education can remain responsive in an era defined by rapid technological change.

The CoP project was driven by a clear objective, to align academic teaching with industry realities, particularly within computer networking and emerging AI-driven technologies. We sought to:

- Identify industry-required competencies.
- Audit current teaching practices.
- Explore curriculum redesign opportunities.
- Foster long-term partnerships that benefit both students and employers.

At its core, the project aimed to move beyond isolated engagements towards ongoing collaboration and shared ownership of knowledge.

The journey culminated in the Industry Partners Dialogue hosted on 26 September 2025 at CUT. The program was carefully structured to allow for diverse voices and perspectives where academic panels unpacked current teaching practices and industry roundtables explored employer expectations. Part of the dialogue was interactive workshops mapped required competencies and a session on stackable micro-credentials introduced flexible learning pathways. Also, alumni shared authentic workplace experiences and readiness challenges.

The tangible outcomes have been encouraging and included commitments from industry partners to support guest lectures and internships.

There were clear recommendations for curriculum enhancement and a strong interest in sustained collaboration through future engagements. Beyond these outputs, the most profound impact has been intangible. Trust was built. Participants began to see themselves not as separate stakeholders but as contributors to a shared ecosystem focused on graduate success.

This experience has significantly shaped my thinking and professional practice. I have become more intentional about embedding industry voices into teaching, encouraging reflective practice among colleagues and viewing AI not as a threat but as an opportunity for innovation.

Moving forward, I plan to formalise this CoP into a standing industry advisory forum and integrate student participation more actively.

This project has demonstrated that Communities of Practice are powerful vehicles for institutional transformation. They strengthen teaching, enhance graduate employability, and position universities as responsive partners in societal development. For CUT, it has strengthened our identity as an institution that listens, adapts, and leads.



BIO

Jacky Nkosi is an academic at the University of South Africa within the Department of African Languages. She holds a National Diploma in Public Relations Management and a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Integrated Organisational Communication. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Language Practice at the Tshwane University of Technology. Her academic and research interests focus on student support and co-curricular activities, with a field of specialisation in student support.

She has presented papers at the South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT) Conference in July 2024, the Linguistic Society of South Africa (LSSA) Conference in August 2025, and the 11th International Conference on Scholarship and Learning in 2025. She has also contributed to conference proceedings at the SoA Conference held in October 2023. This experience reflects her commitment to supporting students and advancing scholarship in the Department of African Languages.



SOTL CONFERENCE REFLECTION

It is striking how, within the academic world, newcomers are often labelled novices. Attending the 11th International Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the Central University of Technology, Free State challenged that label for me—not by negating my newness, but by reframing it as a source of purpose. The experience moved me beyond reflection towards impact, affirming that even those at the beginning of their scholarly journeys have a meaningful role to play in shaping teaching and learning.

From the outset, the conference conveyed a strong sense of intentionality and professionalism. Unlike anything I had previously encountered, the uniqueness of the space fostered openness and warmth, setting the tone for genuine engagement and exchange. The environment was both affirming and inclusive. As a first-time attendee, I felt genuinely received into a community of scholars deeply committed to learning, teaching, and transformation. This immediate sense of belonging was not merely comforting; it was empowering, positioning active participation.

The first day began with a keynote by Prof Hassan, which fundamentally shaped my understanding of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Through an introduction to Activity Theory, I encountered a practical framework for analysing teaching and learning as dynamic, relational systems. One insight that resonated deeply was the assertion that transformation cannot occur without contradiction.

Rather than viewing resistance as an impediment, I began to see it as a necessary catalyst for growth. Prof Hassan also challenged participants to engage critically and responsibly with artificial intelligence, reinforcing the idea that meaningful scholarly inquiry must lead to the creation of new knowledge.

The second day further shifted my thinking from contemplation to responsibility. Prof Maimela's keynote emphasised that what academics think, value, and do genuinely matters. Drawing on psychosocial theory, the address highlighted the centrality of personal and interpersonal relationships in teaching and learning. I was particularly struck by the reminder that learning is often uncomfortable, and that students are not clients to be appeased, but learners who require challenge, guidance, and care. The metaphor of teaching as lighting a fire rather than filling a bucket vividly captured the educator's active, transformative role as one that demands both intention and courage.

The third day consolidated these insights by reinforcing the view of students as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. Prof Makhoahle positioned artificial intelligence as a permanent and transformative presence in higher education, urging academics not to resist change, but to shape it thoughtfully and ethically. This message underscored the importance of scholarly agency in navigating emerging educational landscapes.

Beyond its intellectual richness, the conference itself modelled excellence in practice. Organisation, timekeeping, and attention to detail were consistently exemplary. From the academic programme to the meals, the gala dinner, and overall coordination, the organisers demonstrated what it truly means to enact quality rather than merely theorise about it.

Ultimately, this conference moved me from reflection to impact. It affirmed that scholarly growth is not defined by tenure or title, but by a willingness to engage critically, act responsibly, and contribute meaningfully. As a so-called novice, I leave not only with new insights, but with a strengthened sense of purpose—and a renewed commitment to translating reflection into action.

CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP, GUIDANCE, AND INSPIRATION



Dr Nosihle Sithole, Dr Sipelele Mbatha, Mr Mochina Mphuthi, Dr Xolani Khohliso, Mr Ernest Mpindo, Dr Sebastian Sanjigadu and Dr Bianca Mkhize-Simelane

CELEBRATING TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP: REFLECTIONS FROM DR XOLANI KHOHLISO'S MENTEES.

REFLECTION

In reflecting on our SoTL journey, it is impossible to separate our growth from the profound influence of our mentor, Dr Xolani Khohliso. His mentorship embodies the essence of transformative teaching and learning, and his impact on our scholarly development has been both enduring and life changing.

He mentors with an open-door policy, where we all have access to him for customised advice regarding our research, careers, and well-being. Through our different conversations on the scholarship and research, he encouraged us to think differently about teaching: not as routine practice, but as an intellectual and transformative endeavour. His mentorship demanded excellence, but always with empathy and unwavering support.

Through his guidance, we have achieved milestones that have shaped our academic identity and strengthened our research capacity. These include:

- 25 published articles co-authored with him, and individually published
- 19 conference presentations that advanced our confidence and visibility
- 5 Accepted abstracts and manuscripts in progress
- Contributions to SoTL projects that strengthened CUT's scholarly community through COPs

Each output reflects his ability to stretch our thinking, sharpen our writing, and guide our work to meet high academic standards. Beyond publications, Dr Khohliso nurtured our development as reflective academic practitioners. Through his structured guidance, goal setting, progress tracking strategies, and consistent intellectual engagement, we have developed a stronger academic identity, gained confidence in navigating SoTL spaces, improved our research and writing skills, and achieved clarity in aligning our passions with institutional priorities. His mentorship shaped not only what we achieved but who we became as scholars.

What distinguishes his mentorship approach is the ability to see potential long before mentees see it in themselves. He invests deeply in understanding each mentee's research interests and aligns them with broader national and institutional conversations in higher education. His rare combination of rigour, compassion, intellectual generosity, and strategic vision makes his mentorship exceptional. He builds scholars of purpose and academics who think critically, teach meaningfully, and contribute responsibly to South African higher education.

His influence is evident in the scholars he mentors, the research collaborations he cultivates, and the culture of excellence he strengthens. His work amplifies the university's academic mission and positions SoTL as a cornerstone of quality teaching and learning. For his visionary leadership, transformative mentorship, and unwavering commitment to building scholarly capacity, Dr Khohliso's contribution deserves distinguished recognition.

CELEBRATING TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP: REFLECTIONS FROM DR LEKHU'S MENTEES



Under the leadership and mentorship of Dr Lekhu, our Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) journey in 2025 has been both transformative and impactful. Her mentorship has played a central role in shaping our scholarly identities, strengthening our confidence, and deepening our commitment to academic excellence. Through her guidance, we have moved purposefully from reflection to tangible scholarly impact.

During 2025, we collectively achieved significant scholarly outputs under Dr Lekhu's mentorship. These include a collaborative conference presentation with her, which enhanced our academic visibility and modelled scholarly partnership grounded in rigour and mutual respect. From this collaboration, a journal article was developed and is currently under review, reinforcing the importance of sustained scholarly engagement beyond conference platforms. In addition, we published two articles in DHET accredited journals through interdisciplinary collaboration, reflecting her encouragement to engage across disciplinary boundaries. We also have further manuscripts in progress, and one currently submitted for publication. Since joining the SoTL community, we have attended and presented at multiple national and international conferences, experiences that significantly strengthened our scholarly voice, confidence, and professional visibility.

Beyond these measurable outputs, Dr Lekhu's mentorship is distinguished by her consistent presence, intentional guidance, and genuine care for our development. She provides structured support through regular meetings, both virtual and face to face, where progress, challenges, and future goals are critically reflected upon. She actively ensures sustained engagement in scholarly communities by encouraging and facilitating conference participation, including offering practical support with administrative processes and preparation. These engagements create a safe yet intellectually demanding space where growth is purposeful and continuous.

What sets Dr Lekhu apart as a mentor is her holistic and inclusive approach. Although our research areas do not always align directly with her disciplinary expertise, she consistently offers strategic guidance, encouragement, and high-level academic insight. Her mentorship philosophy prioritises long term scholarly development rather than narrow specialisation.

Through her leadership, we have experienced significant personal and professional growth. Her high academic standards, coupled with compassion, accessibility, and unwavering support, have profoundly influenced our scholarly trajectories. Dr Lekhu's mentorship exemplifies the ethos of "From Reflection to Impact," making her contribution to the CUT SoTL community both distinctive and deserving of recognition.

BIOS

Ms Nomfundo Gladys Khoza is a full-time Lecturer at the Central University of Technology and a PhD candidate in Business Administration. She is a Vice-Chancellor's Award recipient for Early Teaching Career and Community Engagement (Faculty of Management Sciences). Her research interests include collaborative online international learning, digital transformation in SMEs, and online teaching and learning. She is actively involved in curriculum development, quality assurance, and the Ikudu-COIL project supporting internationalisation in higher education.

Ms Pontsho Glorinah Molefe is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Management Studies within the Business Support Studies department. I teach across multiple qualifications, including Project Management, Applied Management, and the Diploma in Management programmes. My role focuses on supporting student learning and academic development within these programmes. I am currently pursuing doctoral studies.

Ms Salu Yekela is an emerging researcher at CUT, focusing on the real impact from the classroom. As a novice scholar in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), she has improved her academic contributions in 2025. Guided by Dr. Lekhu, Salu is dedicated to transforming academic practice through evidence-based reflection and impactful research.



MY DAMASCUS MOMENT



BIO

Dr Nicole Charlene Drude is a lecturer in the Department of Educational and Professional Studies within the Faculty of Humanities. She holds a Doctorate in Education and adopts a student-centred teaching philosophy that emphasizes inclusive, engaging learning through collaboration, differentiated instruction, and real-world application.

REFLECTION

What stood out most in my first PoE workshop experience was the intentional design of each activity. From the start, I realised that this was not a passive, theoretical session, but an engaging and hands-on space that required my full participation.

I was struck by how the facilitator continuously pushed us to reflect deeply on who we are as academics, the values that underpin our teaching, and the evidence that best represents our professional growth. This helped me to recognise that a teaching portfolio is not simply a file of documents, but a curated narrative of my scholarly identity.

The workshop significantly shaped my understanding of documenting academic practice. I began to see documentation as an ongoing, reflective process rather than an event that happens only when required. The emphasis on aligning my teaching philosophy, evidence, and professional narrative with CUT's academic project reminded me that a PoE must be intentional, coherent, and grounded in my lived teaching experiences. This shift helped me appreciate that the portfolio is both a mirror of my practice and a tool for future growth. As a result, there were immediate shifts in how I approach my PoE. I realised that I need to move away from simply collecting certificates or teaching materials and instead begin organising evidence around themes that speak to my philosophy, strengths, and developmental areas. I also recognised the importance of writing reflectively, explaining not only what I do, but why I do it, and how students experience my teaching. The workshop made it clear that evidence without reflection lacks meaning, and reflection without evidence lacks credibility.

Going forward, I plan to use the lessons and templates shared as a structural guide to build a clear, coherent portfolio. The templates provided me with a roadmap for organising sections such as my teaching philosophy, pedagogical strategies, curriculum innovations, assessment practices, and evidence of student learning. I intend to use them not only for this PoE, but also as working documents that I update consistently throughout the year. The workshop has motivated me to approach my portfolio as a living document, one that grows as I grow and that continuously reflects my academic journey and identity and to rethink how I approach my teaching, so that my students are learning whether they are physically in my classroom or not.

STAFF INDUCTION PROGRAMME 2025: A CALL TO ACTION, TO CHANGE LIVES, TRANSFORM SOCIETY AND SHAPES THE FUTURE



The Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD) Unit, within the Centre for Innovative in Learning and Teaching (CILT), hosted its signature induction programme for newly appointed academic staff.

This annual programme is a cornerstone of CUT's academic ecosystem. It is intentionally designed to orient, integrate, and empower new academics as they enter the CUT community. Beyond familiarisation, the induction serves as a structured platform for reflection on academic identity and an invitation to translate that reflection into impactful teaching, research, and community engagement.

The programme covered a broad and carefully curated range of topics essential for academic success and institutional alignment. New academics were introduced to:

- Staff development programmes that support continuous professional growth
- Curriculum development processes aligned with national and institutional priorities

- Teaching and learning frameworks that promote innovation and student-centred pedagogy
- Student support services, highlighting the shared responsibility of academic staff in student success
- Assessment and Graduate Unit processes, ensuring quality assurance and postgraduate excellence

In addition, the induction showcased opportunities available across the broader CUT community, including research supervision support, staff mobility initiatives, and collaborative platforms that foster interdisciplinary engagement.

By bringing together multiple support units, CASD ensured that new academics experienced a coordinated and welcoming entry into the institution. At the heart of the induction was CUT's value-driven approach. CASD underscored the institution's commitment to a guided and supportive academic environment, deeply rooted in the core values of Ubuntu, Integrity, Diversity, Innovation, and Excellence.

As an inclusive university of the future, CUT strives for academics to not only understand these values but to experience them from their first point of contact with the institution. The induction reinforced a sense of belonging and purpose, encouraging new staff to see themselves as active contributors to a shared institutional vision.

The induction was graced by the presence of the former Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor David Ngindi, who warmly welcomed the new academics. He emphasised CUT's commitment to shaping the future of higher education and encouraged participants to engage actively, innovate boldly, and contribute to institutional transformation.

Further reinforcing this message, Dr Khohliso, Director of CASD and now Acting Senior Director of CILT, highlighted the central role of academic staff as the university's most critical resource. He reaffirmed CUT's commitment to "growing its own timber" by investing in the development and advancement of its academics. Addressing the visibly young cohort, he challenged them to avoid complacency, urging them to strike a healthy balance between delivering on their academic responsibilities and intentionally pursuing long-term career growth.

The 2025 CASD induction programme was more than an orientation exercise; it was a strategic intervention aimed at shaping reflective practitioners who are equipped to make lasting impact. By aligning institutional values, academic development opportunities, and leadership vision, the programme set a strong foundation for new academics to thrive.

As these academics transition from induction into practice, they carry with them not only an understanding of CUT systems and support structures, but also a clear call to action; to reflect deeply, engage purposefully, and contribute decisively to the future of CUT.

Through initiatives such as this induction programme, CASD and CILT continue to demonstrate their commitment to academic excellence, student success, staff development, and the transformation of reflection into meaningful institutional and societal impact.



STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC RELEVANCE THROUGH INDUSTRY EXPOSURE AT CUT ARTICLE

A few years ago, the Central University of Technology (CUT) took a bold and strategic step by introducing an Industry Exposure initiative for academic staff supported through the university Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). The purpose of this initiative was clear: to enable academics to align their learning and teaching, curriculum development, and assessment practices with relevant, current, and authentic industry experiences. This approach directly supports CUT's mandate as a university of technology—producing career-ready graduates and advancing applied research that responds to real-world challenges.

Since its inception, the initiative has been warmly received across the institution. The year 2025 marked a significant milestone, with 16 academics supported through funding amounting to R160 000. The Faculty of Management Sciences led participation, with 10 academics undertaking industry visits across South Africa. This was followed by the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (FEBIT) with three academics, the Faculty of Humanities with two academics, and Environmental Health with one academic. These engagements enabled staff to gain first-hand exposure to industry practices, emerging technologies, and evolving professional standards.

In this edition, CASD also shares feedback and reflections from previous recipients of the funding. Their experiences demonstrate tangible value: enhanced module content, refreshed teaching approaches, improved assessment practices, and stronger links between theory and practice. These testimonies illustrate how industry exposure directly enriches academic responsibilities and contributes to student success, employability and relevance.

While demand for the initiative continues to grow, uptake remains uneven across faculties. This imbalance is a concern, and in 2026 CASD aims to achieve a more equitable distribution of participation. From the perspective of the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD), continuous engagement with industry is no longer optional. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), knowledge turnover is accelerating rapidly, driven in part by advances in generative pre-trained transformers and related digital technologies. Without regular industry interaction, academic content risks becoming obsolete and misaligned with professional realities.

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HOW INDUSTRY EXPOSURE WORKS AT CUT (2026)

- Each faculty will be allocated R40 000, distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Academic staff must submit applications to their designated Curriculum and Academic Staff Developer using the approved application form:
 - FEBIT & FHES: Abigail Edem (aedem@cut.ac.za)
 - FMS & FHUM: Bongani Mashaba (bmashaba@cut.ac.za)
- All applications must be approved at faculty level by the Head of Department and the Dean or Assistant Dean.
- Application outcomes will be communicated to applicants by the responsible Academic Staff Developer.

CASD encourages all academics to submit their applications timeously and to take advantage of this valuable opportunity. The Unit looks forward to supporting staff in engaging with industries relevant to their disciplines, thereby strengthening academic practice and reinforcing CUT's position as a responsive university of technology that change lives, transform society and shapes the future.

CUT SUCCESSFULLY HOSTED A DIALOGUE SEMINAR ON AFRICAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PRESERVATION



One of the major highlights for the Curriculum & Academic Staff Development (CASD) in 2025 was the hosting of a high-level dialogue seminar on curriculum transformation, with a specific focus on the preservation of African Indigenous languages. The initiative was a collaborative effort between the CUT Student Representative Council (SRC), the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CILT), and the EMBO Society.

The dialogue sought to advance the use of South African Indigenous languages in higher education beyond symbolic recognition typically associated with Heritage Day celebrations.

The seminar featured a keynote address by Mamokgethi Phakeng, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, titled "The Preservation of South African Indigenous Languages: From Language-as-Problem to Language-as-Resource." In her address, Professor Phakeng underscored the transformative power of language, emphasising that language shapes access to platforms, determines whose voices are heard and understood, influences who is published, who feels confident, and ultimately, who remains silent.

She encouraged participants to actively learn and speak African languages as a means of empowerment and transformation. The event was further enriched by vibrant cultural performances from groups such as EzikaShaka, the EMBO Xhosa Society, VhaTshonga, and Tswana cultural groups, who captivated attendees with traditional dances, Amagwijo, and music.

Professor Malebo, then Senior Director of CILT and now Dean of the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, together with Dr Choice Makhetha, Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, expressed their appreciation for the visionary leadership of the SRC under the stewardship of the then President Jemina Mokoena. They also commended the organising team for their commitment and dedication in delivering a highly successful and impactful event. Importantly, the dialogue served as a precursor to the much-anticipated Africa Month commemorations held annually in May. Reflecting on the significance of the seminar, Professor Malebo noted, "As we commemorate Africa Month, these discussions on indigenous languages will not end here; they will continue to find expression within the CUT community and across the continent."

Ms Jemina Mokoena highlighted that the seminar formed part of a broader three-day Quality Assurance Week, which included sustained engagements with student organisations and institutional structures. "Our aim is to foster a vibrant and diverse cultural presence at CUT, where all students feel seen and heard," she said. This milestone event set a strong and purposeful tone for continued institutional conversations on curriculum transformation, linguistic inclusivity, and the meaningful integration of African Indigenous knowledge systems within higher education.

ADVANCING ACADEMIC PRACTICE THROUGH STRATEGIC POLICY AND FRAMEWORK REVIEW

From a governance perspective, the Central University of Technology (CUT) recognises the importance of the systematic review of existing policies and frameworks, as well as the development of new or revised governance instruments. These processes are essential for ensuring institutional coherence, regulatory compliance, and strategic alignment within the university. Regular policy, framework, and guideline reviews enable institutions to respond proactively to evolving imperatives, quality assurance requirements, and shifts in the higher education landscape, while mitigating institutional risk and avoiding fragmented or outdated practices.

For a centre such as the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT), and its sub-units including the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD) unit, robust and current governance documents are critical. Such documents establish clear mandates, delineate roles and responsibilities, and guide operational and developmental processes across the centre's areas of work.

Well-articulated and regularly reviewed frameworks strengthen accountability, promote consistency of implementation across faculties, and legitimise the interventions of CILT and CASD as institutionally sanctioned, evidence-informed, and strategically positioned to enhance academic quality, staff capability, and student success.

In 2025, CASD initiated a comprehensive process of reviewing and developing several key governance documents related to its core functions. Notably, this included the development and approval of the *Guidelines for Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the Community of Practice Framework*. Towards the end of 2025, CASD also finalised the Teaching Portfolio Development Manual for CUT.

Currently, CILT is leading the review of the Teaching and Learning Plan 2026-2030 and the development of the institution's Teaching and Learning Policy. Following a thorough consultation process, these documents will be submitted to all relevant internal governance structures for approval. In addition, CASD, with the support of CUT's Computer Services, completed the development of a Curriculum Mapping Tool designed to track and strengthen alignment across CUT's curricula.

Collectively, these initiatives affirm CILT's commitment to establishing a structured, coherent, and strategically aligned support centre that contributes meaningfully to institutional effectiveness and academic excellence.



One of the most poignant moments for the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) in 2025 was the departure of Professor Ntsoaki Malebo from her role as Senior Director. Her appointment as Dean of the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, effective 1 September 2025, signalled the close of a significant chapter in the Centre's history. While she remains within the University and continues to be a valued source of expertise for CILT, her absence from the Centre's day-to-day leadership is deeply felt.

Professor Malebo's tenure was characterised by warmth, humility, and an unwavering commitment to people. She was widely admired for strengthening institutional systems while simultaneously uplifting individuals and cultivating a collaborative culture through the breaking down of silos. Her leadership left an indelible mark to the CILT family.

In the period following her departure, Dr Khohliso assumed the role of Acting Senior Director, providing stability and continuity as the Centre awaits the appointment of a new Senior Director. Although the CILT community fully supported Professor Malebo's professional progression, her departure stood out as a bittersweet moment in 2025, defined by deep gratitude for her service and a sense of loss for a leader who profoundly shaped the Centre.

CILT extends its sincere appreciation to Professor Malebo for her exemplary stewardship and enduring contribution to the Centre and the University at large. Her principled, people-centred leadership strengthened CILT's strategic direction, systems, and collaborative ethos, leaving a legacy that will continue to influence the Centre for years to come.



Siyaphumelela
we succeed

**CUT JOINS THE SIYAPHUMELELA
NETWORK TO STRENGTHEN STUDENT
SUCCESS**

In 2024, the Central University of Technology (CUT) formally joined the Siyaphumelela Network, marking a significant milestone in the institution's commitment to advancing student success. Siyaphumelela, meaning "we succeed", is a national collaborative initiative that brings together South African universities to share evidence-based practices, data-informed strategies, and institutional learning aimed at improving student outcomes.

Currently, the Siyaphumelela Network comprises 20 of South Africa's 26 public universities and is supported by the Kresge Foundation and Saide. Through this collective, participating institutions work collaboratively to address systemic challenges such as student retention, progression, and throughput.

CUT's entry into the network followed the successful submission of a well-considered proposal developed by the Centre for Innovative in Learning and Teaching (CILT). The proposal articulated a comprehensive, institution-wide approach to student success, grounded in the understanding that meaningful improvement requires collaboration across all university stakeholders. CILT's philosophy positions student success not as the responsibility of a single unit, but as a shared institutional endeavour involving academic departments, support services, and students themselves.

A notable outcome of CUT's participation has been the strengthening of internal collaboration. Units within CILT, including the Curriculum & Academic Staff Development (CASD) Unit, Student Academic Development and Support (SADS) Unit, and E-learning and Teaching Unit (E-Let), have come together to conceptualise and implement a robust, integrated student success strategy. This coordinated approach ensures alignment across academic development, student support, and data-driven initiatives.

Within this integrated framework, CASD plays a critical role by working closely with academic staff on development, curriculum design, assessment practices, and the use of student feedback to inform teaching and learning improvements. This close engagement with faculties is essential to embedding student success interventions directly into the academic core of the institution, rather than positioning them as peripheral support mechanisms.

It is anticipated that these collective and data-informed efforts will contribute to addressing persistent challenges, including the high retention rates in certain modules. By strengthening collaboration, leveraging peer-led support, and aligning academic and support structures, CUT aims to improve student progression, retention, and overall student success.

CUT's participation in the Siyaphumelela Network thus represents more than a partnership; it signals a strategic commitment to learning with and from the broader higher education sector, and to placing student success at the centre of institutional practice.



NEW TEAM MEMBERS

**MS. REBABALETWE MATEKANE**

Rebabaletswe Matekane joined CASD in November 2025 as a Unit Administrator. She holds a Diploma in Office Management and Technology and an Advanced Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation, and she is currently pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Project Management. Ms Matekane has served CUT in various capacities, including Project Administrator Intern in Governance, Risk and Compliance, Student Assistant in the Centre for Global Engagement, and Office Assistant in Academic Structure and Enrolment Services. Through these roles, she has developed strong competencies in project monitoring, document management, and administrative operations. She possesses strong analytical skills, a high level of attention to detail, and the ability to adapt effectively to dynamic work environments, positioning her as an asset in both project-driven and administrative roles.

**SELLENG IRENE LEBURU**

Affectionately known as Irene, is a Language Development Project Administrator who joined CASD in December 2025. She holds a Diploma in Office Management and Technology and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and is currently pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Project Management. She brings three years of administrative experience within the higher education sector. Prior to joining CASD, she served at CUT in several capacities, including Student Assistant in the Disability Unit, Intern in Financial Reporting, and Part-time Finance Assistant on the Civil Lab Pothole Project. She is recognised for her reliability, accountability, and strong commitment to service excellence.

As CASD, we are delighted to welcome our new colleagues to the team and look forward to learning from them as they also learn from us. We trust that they will find the work environment fulfilling and that their contributions will support the broader CUT community in our pursuit of being a leading university of technology that changes lives, transforms society, and shapes the future.

28-30 JANUARY 2026**ACADEMIC STAFF INDUCTION**

📍 Off campus
(Protea Hotel
Bloemfontein)

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Teaching and Learning Theories, Curriculum, Assessment techniques, Quality and Work Integrated learning.

3 FEBRUARY 2026**INDUSTRY EXPOSURE WORKSHOP**

📍 Virtual

🕒 14H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Information Session

18 FEBRUARY 2026**DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES**

📍 Virtual

🕒 14H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Development of assessment activities

19-20 FEBRUARY 2026**TEACHING PORTFOLIO WORKSHOP**

📍 Outside campus

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Teaching Portfolio Workshop

23 - 27 FEBRUARY 2026**PGDIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

📍 CILT Training Room

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Teaching and Learning in HE (1st Year)

2 - 6 MARCH 2026**PGDIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

📍 CILT Training Room

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:Assessment in CILT Training room
HE modules (2nd Year)**4 MARCH 2026****COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE WORKSHOP**

📍 Virtual

🕒 14H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Communities of Practice

17 - 19 MARCH 2026**WRITING RETREAT**

📍 Outside campus

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Article writing


CUT RECESS 30 MARCH TO 6 APRIL 2026

TERM 2

15 APRIL 2026

 Bloemfontein Campus

AWARENESS AROUND CURRICULA TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

 12H00 - 16H00


TOPIC:

Incorporating Student Feedback in Curricula Transformation

5 MAY 2026

 Bloemfontein Campus

AI MASTERCLASS ON LEVERAGING AI IN ACADEMIC TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH

 12H00 - 16H00


TOPIC:

AI Masterclass on Leveraging AI in Academic Teaching, Learning and Research

20 - 22 MAY 2026

 CILT Training room

PGDIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

 08H00 - 16H00


TOPIC:

Education Technology in Learning and Teaching

1 JULY 2026

 Virtual

SOTL WORKSHOP

 14H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning


CUT RECESS 6 JULY - 18 JULY 2026

TERM 3

27 - 31 JULY 2026

 CILT Training room
WIL Training room

PGDIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Curriculum Development in HE (1st Year)
Quality Assurance in HE module (2nd Year)

18 AUGUST 2026

 Virtual

SOTL WORKSHOP

 14H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

26 AUGUST 2026

 Bloemfontein Campus

CURRICULUM DECOLONIZATION PRACTICAL WORKSHOP

 12H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Transformative Pedagogies and Inclusive Practices

14 - 16 SEPTEMBER 2026

 Venue to be confirmed

WRITING RETREAT

 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

SoTL Writing retreat

28 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

PGDIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

📍 Off campus
(Protea Hotel
Bloemfontein)

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Teaching and Learning Theories, Curriculum, Assessment techniques, Quality and Work Integrated learning.

CUT RECESS 5 OCTOBER – 9 OCTOBER 2026

7 – 9 OCTOBER 2026

12TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SOTL)

📍 CUT Hotel School

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

SoTL Conference

14 - 16 OCTOBER 2026

PGDIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

📍 CILT Training Room

🕒 08H00 - 16H00

TOPIC:

Work-Integrated Learning module



CASD AND SOTL TEAM

DR XOLANI KHOHLISO



DIRECTOR: CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT (CASD) AND
HEAD: SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SOTL)



SELLENG IRENE LEBURU
LANGUAGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT:
PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR



REBABALETWE MATEKANE
UNIT ADMINISTRATOR: CASD



DINEO MOPELI
SOTL: COORDINATOR



ABIGAIL EDEM
CURRICULUM AND
ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPER



BONGANI MASHABA
CURRICULUM AND
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