

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

# Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit



20 YEARS OF THINKING BEYOND



Central University of  
Technology, Free State



## 2023/2024 NEWSLETTER

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# WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

## **Prof Ntsoaki Malebo:** Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching

I would like to commence my reflections in the newsletter with a quote from Bell Hooks: “What we do is more important than what we say or what we say we believe.” As I reflect on the endeavours of the Curriculum and Academic Staff (CASD) unit throughout 2023, I am struck by the tangible outputs that underscore a commitment to action over mere rhetoric. In an ever-evolving landscape of higher education, institutions must be agile and responsive to meet the diverse needs of stakeholders. These needs, emanating from students, industry, government, and society, often present competing demands, necessitating ongoing professional learning among academics to navigate this complex terrain. Industries expect universities to produce job-ready graduates with minimal handholding, while societies and students perceive a university qualification as a gateway to socio-economic advancement.

Meanwhile, for the government, education serves as a transformative force that not only shapes society but also bolsters the nation’s economic prowess. In alignment with the university’s vision and strategic objectives, the CASD unit within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching has devised an array of programs aimed at supporting the professional growth of academics.

This newsletter represents a reflection of how these initiatives have enriched academics’ professional journey. The Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, for instance, has emerged as a catalyst for personal and professional growth among academics, fostering a culture of continuous learning and enabling practitioners to bridge theory and practice through reflective pedagogy. Similarly, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning program empowers academics to transcend reflection, embarking on research endeavors that challenge conventional wisdom in learning and teaching methodologies.

As a technology-centric institution offering career-focused programs, sustained engagement with industry is paramount to ensuring curriculum relevance and responsiveness to the demands of the workforce. The Industry Exposure Program not only facilitates dialogue between academics and industry stakeholders on curriculum matters but also underscores the role of academics in nurturing the professional identity of students, aligning curriculum and pedagogy with the realities of various professions. Through the implementation of these programs, the CASD unit exemplifies CILT’s unwavering commitment to nurturing academics as the cornerstone of CUT’s success.

# Message of the Unit Leader

## Dr Xolani Khohliso: Deputy Director & Head of SoTL



Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to extend warm greetings to all members of the Central University of Technology community. As we embark on the exciting journey of 2024, I find it fitting to reflect on the remarkable strides we made in 2023 and share our vision for the future. As the Deputy Director of the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit and head of SoTL, I am privileged to lead a team of dedicated professionals committed to shaping the academic landscape of our esteemed institution. The Central University of Technology's Vision 2030 propels us towards becoming a leading African university of technology, shaping the future through innovation. Our unit plays a pivotal role in realising this vision by implementing Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and institutional policies related to curriculum, teaching, learning, and academic development initiatives. We are entrusted with overseeing the process of curriculum design and development for all programs, ensuring the academic credibility of these programs in alignment with the University's strategic goals.

In 2023, our unit demonstrated unwavering commitment to excellence in higher education. We meticulously planned, coordinated, and implemented innovative, effective, and efficient academic staff development programmes. Our support extended beyond traditional boundaries as we collaborated with academic staff to transform university curricula, engage in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, collect, and analyse Student Feedback on learning experiences, and facilitate industry exposure for our academics. These engaging and enriching programmes are aimed at advancing the academic excellence and professional development of our esteemed institution. Some of the exciting programs that marked our calendar included the Academic Induction, Portfolio of Evidence Workshops, two Curriculum Decolonization Practical Workshops, the AI and ChatGPT Indaba, a Scholarly Book Project Writing Retreat, and three Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) Writing Retreats.

The Academic Induction served as a foundational step in welcoming and guiding new academic staff, ensuring a seamless integration into our academic community. The Portfolio of Evidence Workshop equipped participants with valuable insights into effective documentation of academic achievements and contributions. Our commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse curriculum was evident in the two Curriculum Decolonization Practical Workshops, where we explored innovative approaches to make our curriculum more representative and culturally sensitive. The AI and CHATGPT INDABA brought together experts and enthusiasts in the field, providing a platform for collaborative discussions on the integration of artificial intelligence in higher education. This event not only showcased technological advancements but also highlighted the intersection of innovation and education. The Scholarly Book Project Writing Retreat was a testament to our dedication to scholarly endeavours, providing a conducive environment for academics to embark on collaborative writing projects.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are poised to build upon our successes and confront new challenges with resilience and determination. The Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit remains committed to fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and continuous improvement. In the following pages, we will share the highlights of our successful programs, reflections from our participants and partners, and present the lineup of programs for staff development in 2024.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all members of the academic community for their unwavering support and dedication. Together, let us continue to shape the future through education and innovation.

I now invite you to be inspired and motivated by the contents of this magazine!!

# 2023 SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMES HIGHLIGHTS

## NEWLY APPOINTED ACADEMIC STAFF INDUCTION



The Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit meticulously curated an induction program on the 7th – 8th February 2023 at Protea Hotel Willow Lake, centering on critical aspects integral to academic roles within the institution.

This comprehensive initiative aimed to equip new faculty members with essential knowledge and skills to thrive in their academic endeavours. Key focus areas.

- o The induction commenced by exploring the core of academia, delineating the responsibilities, expectations, and values emblematic of academic life at CUT.

- o Sessions were tailored to provide a comprehensive understanding of the university's unique context, emphasizing its history, values, and vision, thereby aligning new faculty members with the institution's ethos.

- o A high level of the concept of responsive curriculum design and the significance of industry exposure in enriching the learning experiences of students, fostering practical and applicable knowledge was discussed.

- o The programme had a session that was dedicated to exploring diverse pedagogical

methods and foundational learning theories, empowering faculty with effective teaching strategies aligned with contemporary educational paradigms.

- o In recognition of the evolving landscape of education, sessions were devoted to e-learning methodologies and cultivating 21st-century skills among students, preparing faculty to adapt to modern educational technologies.

- o Comprehensive discussions and workshops elucidated various assessment techniques and the art of designing effective rubrics to evaluate student performance, ensuring fair and constructive assessment practices.

# 1ST PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE, THEMED: "NAVIGATING THE Landscape of Academic Excellence."



The Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit hosted a highly impactful Portfolio of Evidence program on April 19, 2023. This initiative aimed to equip academic staff with crucial insights and strategies across various key areas essential for their professional development.

#### Key Focus Areas and Speakers:

1. Research Project Development and Outputs, Postgraduate Supervision, and Student Support:

- Presented by Prof. B Dube from the University of the Free State (UFS), this session delved into effective methodologies for research project development, maximizing research outputs, and fostering robust postgraduate supervision while ensuring comprehensive student support.

2. Teaching Philosophy, Promotion of Learning, Assessment Practices, Management, and Administration:

- Prof. J Swart from CUT delivered an enriching session focusing on teaching philosophies, fostering learning promotion within the academic setting, implementing effective assessment practices, and

navigating the landscape of management and administration within academia.

3. Community Engagement and Projects:

- Dr. M Parks from CUT spearheaded discussions on the vital role of community engagement within academia. This session shed light on the significance of community-oriented projects, emphasizing their impact and the integration of such initiatives within academic frameworks.

The Portfolio of Evidence program provided a comprehensive platform for academic staff at CUT to engage with experts in crucial domains. The diverse range of topics, spanning research, teaching methodologies, community engagement, and administrative aspects, empowered participants with multifaceted insights crucial for their professional growth and contribution to the university's mission.

# ACADEMIC INSIGHT FROM SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING WRITING RETREAT!



On the 16th – 18th of May 2023, at the Protea Hotel, Bloemfontein. Academics came together for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) writing retreat, providing a unique space for lecturers to explore reflective teaching practices, research, and innovation. The transformative experience yielded several key insights such as participants valued the uninterrupted time dedicated to advancing their SoTL projects, making substantial progress in research, writing, and curriculum development. The retreat's collaborative environment brought together academics from various disciplines and institutions, fostering the exchange of ideas, feedback, and insights to refine teaching methodologies.

Engaging in reflective practices led to the development of innovative teaching strategies, increased student engagement, and improvements in the overall learning experience. The retreat's supportive environment renewed participants' motivation and enthusiasm for SoTL endeavours, addressing challenges in finding time for reflective writing amid teaching and administrative responsibilities. Providing a respite from the daily demands of academic life, the retreat allowed academics to focus solely on their SoTL projects in a relaxed setting, contributing to a healthier work-life balance and increased job satisfaction. This SoTL writing retreat proved to be a transformative experience, offering academics a dedicated space for research, collaboration, and professional growth. The insights gained and connections forged during this retreat are set to have a lasting impact on the field of education.

# SUCCESS AND IMPARTS VALUABLE LESSONS FROM AI AND CHATGPT INDABA



*Dr X Khohliso (Deputy Director: CASD), Prof DP Ngidi (DVC: Teaching & Learning), Mr J Joubert (Facilitator), Prof N Malebo (Senior Director: CILT), Mrs A Edem (Curriculum and Academic Staff Developer), Prof B Kotze (FEBIT Assistant Dean), Mr N Kramm (Facilitator)*

In a groundbreaking event hosted by the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit at the Central University of Technology, the AI and ChatGPT Indaba drew to a triumphant close, leaving participants inspired and equipped with valuable insights. Under the adept leadership of the Deputy Director: Dr Xolani Khohliso and nestled within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, led by Senior Director: Prof N Malebo, the Indaba proved to be a resounding success. This Indaba was themed: "Transforming Education: Harnessing the Power of AI in Teaching and Learning".

Experts, researchers, Lecturers, and enthusiasts from across the university community and Free State region gathered at the Indaba to explore the transformative potential of AI and ChatGPT in education and beyond. The event showcased remarkable achievements, revealing how AI technologies, particularly ChatGPT, are reshaping the future of learning and interaction. The programme was officially opened by Prof A Ngowi, the DVC for Research, Innovation and Engagement and Keynote address by Prof Ben Kotze who shared a very insightful presentation. The co-presenters, Mr Neil Kramm (Rhodes University) and Mr Jody Joubert (University of Pretoria) facilitated the conversations in a thought-provoking approach which emphasized the role of AI-powered tools in enhancing the learning experience, fostering engagement, and promoting personalized education. Attendees were able to witness firsthand how AI-driven chatbots can provide instant support, answer queries, and adapt to individual learning styles.

Dr Khohliso stated that “The driving force behind this Indaba is our collective recognition of AI’s potential to enhance engagement, personalize learning, and cultivate critical thinking,” Dr Khohliso continued, “In an era marked by information abundance and digital interconnectedness, the role of educators must adapt to prepare students for an increasingly complex future,” He stressed the importance of fostering an ecosystem of responsible AI integration, where lecturers, technologists and researchers collaborate to design AI-powered tools that prioritize ethical considerations and student well-being Prof. N Malebo, the visionary leader of the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, lauded the event’s success as a testament to the university’s commitment to staying at the forefront of educational advancement and innovation. “The Indaba exemplifies our dedication to nurturing a culture of innovation that enriches the learning experience and prepares our students for the challenges of tomorrow, graduate attributes and striving towards vision 2030” Prof. Malebo remarked.

As the AI and ChatGPT Indaba ended, participants left with a renewed sense of optimism and a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between AI and education. This programme was further supported by the Dean of Management Sciences, Prof A Strydom and the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor D Ngidi through their presence and participation.

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION WEEK ON COMPETENCY BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY



Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), among other universities in South Africa, was selected to participate in a study visit through Higher Education Reform Experts South Africa (HERESA) to capacitate the Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) within the selected institutions to revise/develop new strategies and policy review, within respective institutions on the teaching and learning strategies, outcome-based learning and specifically Competence-Based Teaching and Learning (CBTL). Through the Office of the acting DVC: Prof Samson Mashele, Dr Zenzile Khetsha was selected to participate in this process, where participants visited the Tampere University of Applied Sciences, which is based in Finland (Tampere) on behalf of CUT, end of October 2022. This was followed up with a benchmarking workshop early in March 2023, where the HERESA EU Partners travelled to South Africa, in Cape Town. All institutions pitched their strategies, and CUT was amongst the institutions with a brilliant strategy, focusing on the development of assessment and evaluation tools using the CBL strategy.

Following the workshop, an opportunity to invite an expert in the Training Assistance Missions (TAMs) and the mentoring/shadowing visits was organized by a Technical Assistance Organisation Team (TAOT) through HERESA, which fielded proposals, provided feedback on the proposals, and supported the logistical arrangements of the TAM and the mentoring/shadowing visits. Central University of Technology, Free State was among the institutions approved for TAMs, and Prof Viktor Kordes from the KTH Royal University was identified as the European Expert suitable for the strategy espoused by CUT. The Central University of Technology, Free State through the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT), headed by Prof Ntsoaki Malebo (Senior Director), and Dr Xolani Khohliso (Deputy Director: Curriculum and Academic Staff Development) hosted Prof Viktor Kordes for a four-day programme, 4 – 7 September 2023, with Dr Zenzile Khetsha facilitating the Technical Assistance Activities process.

During this week, Prof Viktor Kordas presented in an institutional workshop on the draft strategy, titled: Developing a Competence-based Assessment and Evaluation Tool for a University of Technology: CUT using the Competence-Based Teaching and Learning Model, that the CUT is involved in organizing. The first day was organized as a closed workshop with Prof Viktor Kordas, CILT Office, Institutional Planning and Quality Enhancement (IPQE), Dean of Students, Alumni Office, and Dr Zenzile Khetsha to revise the strategy. Key aspects captured during the first day closed workshop included finding effective ways to celebrate the institutional Vision 2030 and embracing CUT Values by embedding them within the curriculum, thereby, graduating students with CUT Values. Mrs Pietersen Jacqueline (Deputy Director: Alumni Relations), corroborated this, and found the CBL as a suitable strategy to bear graduates with the CUT trademark; however, it remains a big question what exactly the CUT trademark entails. Mr Mohau Manyarela (Senior Coordinator: Student Academic Support Innovation in Learning/Teaching) also recommended finding the trademark, and the celebration of CUT Values meaningfully. Prof Viktor Kordas further emphasized sensitively with the South African context, how CBL strategies in the European Union are implemented, and could not disagree more with the challenges associated with the buy-in of strategies of this nature.

The second, and third day was a round table consultative process with the four faculties, the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology in Bloemfontein Campus, and the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Management Sciences in Welkom Campus, respectively, and key stakeholders. During the consultative discussions with the academics and key stakeholders, trends, and current challenges in the form of a series of lectures on the topic to address the strategy selected by CUT, to target faculty and leadership. Using the CBL model as the centre of discussion, special attention was given to approaches for curricula development, pedagogy, engaging industry partners, and evaluation of competencies and psycho-and-meta cognitive skills.

As part of the key stakeholders, students also explicitly shared their experiences and provided inputs towards the rolling out of the strategy. The workshop was wrapped on day four, where the WIL Office, represented by Dr Henry Jacobs and Ms Rosita Rhode made a substantial contribution to the strategy, identifying using Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as the centre of the assessment and evaluation of students' psycho-and-meta cognitive skills. Dr Xolani Khohliso made a remark on the context-based core curricula that will encourage the uptake of the graduate attributes, thereby graduating students with special technical expertise, and with that, celebrating CUT Vision 2030. Prof Ntsoaki Malebo closed the workshop with remarks on the organizational culture, especially on the celebration of Vision 2030, warranting ownership by all stakeholders

# The Unit Celebrates the Success of Curriculum Decolonisation Practical Workshop

## Part 1 of the curriculum decolonization workshop



*Dr Xolani Khohliso (Deputy Director), Prof Siphamandla Zondi – UJ (Facilitator) and Mrs. Abigail Edem (Curriculum & Academic Staff Developer)*

In a significant step toward inclusive education, the Central University of Technology successfully hosted a curriculum decolonization practical workshop on August 24th, 2023. The event, organized by the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit and overseen by Deputy Director Dr Xolani Khohliso, marked a pivotal moment in reshaping higher education. The highlight of the workshop was the insightful facilitation by renowned academic, Prof Siphamandla Zondi from the University of Johannesburg.

Prof. Zondi's expertise in the field brought a wealth of knowledge to the participants, shedding light on the importance of decolonising curricula and its positive impact on education. Prof. Zondi focused on the fact that decolonising the curriculum is not just about changing content. It's about challenging the dominant narratives, acknowledging diverse worldviews, and encouraging critical thinking. This process empowers students to question, analyse, and contribute to knowledge from their own perspectives. Participants were engaged in thought-provoking discussions, interactive sessions, and collaborative activities that explored various approaches to integrating diverse perspectives, voices, and histories into the curriculum. The workshop not only emphasized the significance of embracing local context and global perspectives but also highlighted the need for inclusivity, critical thinking, and social consciousness.

Dr Khohliso expressed his enthusiasm for this transformative initiative, stating, "Decolonizing higher education is not just a goal, but a necessity. It's about acknowledging diverse knowledge systems and perspectives and providing a well-rounded education that truly prepares our students for a globalized world." The success of this workshop has paved the way for a highly anticipated follow-up.

## Part 2 of the curriculum decolonization workshop



**O**n the 10th of November 2023, part 2 of the practical workshop was of great success. This event delved even deeper into practical strategies and actions that can be taken to reshape curricula, and decolonised research for publication ensuring a more inclusive and equitable educational experience. Our institution's commitment to fostering an inclusive, representative, and culturally relevant education is evident through initiatives like this workshop. As academia continues to evolve, efforts such as these pave the way for a more equitable and diverse educational landscape.

# Empowering CUT Academic Staff: A Successful Academic Portfolio of Evidence Workshop



The Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit hosted a two-day Academic Portfolio of Evidence Workshop at Protea Hotel in Bloemfontein on September 13th and 14th, 2023. Facilitated by renowned academic, Professor James Swart, this workshop has emerged as a significant milestone in enhancing the professional growth and development of academic staff.

The primary objective of this Academic Portfolio of Evidence workshop was to equip academic staff with the essential tools and comprehensive guidance required to create and present a portfolio showcasing their academic achievements, skills, and learning experiences accumulated over the course of their academic careers. The workshop was attended by lecturers from various faculties, who came together with a common goal - to refine their portfolios to better reflect their accomplishments and capabilities.

Professor Swart, who boasts an impressive academic background himself, spearheaded the workshop with his wealth of knowledge and experience. The workshop's comprehensive curriculum covered a wide range of critical topics, including the selection of appropriate materials for the portfolio, strategies for organizing the portfolio logically and coherently, and techniques for highlighting academic strengths and achievements.

One of the standout features of the workshop was its focus on professional presentation. Attendees learned how to create both digital and physical portfolios, ensuring that their work was accessible and engaging for various audiences. The workshop also included sessions on how to prepare for a portfolio review or presentation, equipping participants with the skills needed to effectively communicate the depth and breadth of their academic expertise. The success of the Academic Portfolio of Evidence Workshop is a testament to the commitment of the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development unit to the continuous improvement and professional development of academic staff.

Through providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to showcase their talents effectively, the unit is empowering academics to excel in their roles and contribute more profoundly to the academic community. As the participants returned to their respective faculties, they carried with them a renewed sense of purpose and a polished academic portfolio, ready to inspire and educate the next generation of students. The impact of this retreat is expected to reverberate throughout the academic community, further elevating the standards of teaching and learning at CUT.

## IKUDU-COIL: THREE DAY REFLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The IKUDU-COIL Three-day engagement took place in South Africa from the 12-15 September 2023 at the Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani Hotel in Durban



The CUT IKUDU-COIL delegates that took part in the three-day engagement were Ms Leanri van Heerden (E-learning Designer), Prof Ntsoaki Malebo (Senior Director: Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching), Ms Nolwazi Qumbisa (Ngap Lecturer in Built Environment), Ms Tsholofelo Tshabadira (Junior Lecturer in Design and Studio Art), Dr Xolani Khohliso (Deputy Director: Curriculum and Academic Staff Development).

The IKudu project has been conceptualised to develop a contextualised South African concept of Internationalization of the Curriculum, which integrates Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) virtual exchanges.

The purpose of this project is to be transforming curricular through internationalisation and virtual exchanges using COIL methodology. Central University of Technology (CUT) has successfully partnered with the following Universities with the IKudu COIL Projects; The Hague University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), University of Coventry (UK), Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands).

## Centre For Innovation In Learning And Teaching Hosts The 8th Annual Scholarship Of Teaching And Learning Conference On The 5th And 6th October 2023



The conference, themed “SoTL and Transformation: Adapting to Evolving Educational Policies, Curricula, and Pedagogies in Higher Education,” served as an interactive platform that facilitated the sharing of inventive ideas and effective teaching and learning practices. It brought together a community of like-minded educators, researchers, and practitioners who collaborated to address the prevailing educational challenges in higher education.

As a result of this conference, participants not only exchanged valuable insights but also harvested numerous tangible benefits for the higher education sector. These fruits included the development of actionable strategies for adapting to changing educational policies, curricular innovations, and evolving pedagogical methods, ultimately leading to enhanced student learning experiences, and improved educational outcomes.

This conference saw 89 papers presented through the following conference themes:

Theme 1: Artificial intelligence in Education - 7 papers

Theme 2: Promotion of quality Teaching and Learning - 28 papers

Theme 3: Transformative assessment practices or pedagogies -18 papers

Theme 4: Educating for sustainability - 24 papers.

Theme 5: Decolonization and Africanization of Curriculum - 9 papers

The conference’s success can be measured not only by the knowledge shared but also by the practical solutions and innovations that emerged from this collective effort.

## 11TH ANNUAL ARESA RESEARCH ETHICS SEMINAR HOSTED BY STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY (12 -13 OCTOBER 2023)



*Dr Parks Makhoahle (Lecturer: Biomedical Technology), Dr Xolani Khohliso (Deputy Director: Curriculum and Academic Staff Development), Dr Deliwe Mtyongwe-Mongalo (Lecturer: Dental Assisting), Mr Malesela Matlawe (Research Ethics and Integrity Officer).*

In a remarkable display of intellectual prowess and commitment to ethical research, four esteemed members of the Central University of Technology staff recently made their mark at the 11th Annual ARESA Research Ethics Seminar. The event served as a dynamic forum for in-depth discussions on "Generative AI and Ethics by Design," a topic of utmost relevance in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape. The central theme of the seminar revolved around the ethical considerations associated with generative AI, a field at the forefront of innovation.

Our staff members actively engaged in thought-provoking conversations about the responsible development and deployment of AI systems, with a clear emphasis on the importance of ethics by design. This concept calls for AI technology to not only be innovative but, more importantly, ethical by design. The aim is to ensure that AI contributes to the betterment of society without compromising fundamental ethical principles or causing unintended harm.

# Academic Retreat Sparks Fresh Thinking on Curriculum and Pedagogy



A vibrant group of academics gathered at the Protea Willow Lake Hotel from December 6-8 for a whirlwind writing retreat focused on the groundbreaking upcoming scholarly book titled "Perspectives on Curriculum as Praxis: Implications for Higher Education Pedagogy". The retreat facilitated by the esteemed Prof. E.M. Mqgwashu (NWU), the retreat was a resounding success, paving the way for a transformative collection of cutting-edge ideas and insights.

This book promises to be a vital resource for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, offering a platform for critical and reflexive conversations on curriculum shifts and the responsive pedagogical practices they necessitate. With the 21st century demanding agile and adaptable learning environments, this collection could not be more timely. The retreat buzzed with collaborative energy as chapter contributors engaged deep into their research and experiences. Prof. Mqgwashu's insightful guidance spurred productive discussions and revisions, ensuring the book will offer a rich perspective.

"This retreat was a game-changer," shared Dr Xolani Khohliso, a co-editor and organiser. "Our engagements challenged assumptions, and pushed boundaries as this book promises to be a landmark publication, inspiring academics and researchers to rethink curriculum design and embrace innovative pedagogical approaches."

The retreat concluded on a high note, with participants expressing a deep sense of accomplishment and shared purpose. Their collaborative efforts have laid the groundwork for a book that will not only enrich academic discourse but also empower them to shape a more responsive and equitable higher education landscape.



### SoTL LEARNING PROGRAMMES



#### **Miss Nosihle Veronica Sithole**

##### **Short Bio**

Nosihle Veronica Sithole is a young ambitious lecturer who joined Central University of Technology in 2021 under the Post Graduate Studies Education Department and specialises in Commerce Education. She studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and has recently submitted her PhD thesis for examination. Due to the diffusion of technology throughout the globe, she is very keen on utilisation of Information and Communication Technology in pedagogy. Ms Sithole here writes about her experience of being a SoTL member.

##### **Reflection**

SoTL activities have developed me immensely as a novice academic. I have gained massive knowledge and skills both personally and professionally from their workshops and writing retreats. However, writing retreats have been remarkable in my academic journey. In my first writing retreat, I was very anxious since I just started my scholarly journey. However, to my surprise, it was the greatest opportunity to develop my academic writing. I learned enormous and crucial information about academic writing. Evidently, my PhD thesis is well written and already submitted. In addition, there are papers that I started working on in the writing retreats and they are published.

In all the writing retreats we were given an opportunity to submit abstracts of papers/ work we intend to publish prior to the writing retreat. This was a great advantage for me as a new researcher since during the writing retreat the facilitator and the experienced researchers would assist me with skills and insightful data for writing and publication. The discussions and activities were always filled with so much knowledge and were eye-opening. For me, working with experienced researchers who have produced various works in academia was valuable and inspiring. It was also delightful to see how experienced researchers would help you to succeed with whatever project you are working on.

My overall experience with SoTL activities has been truly excellent. The programmes were exceptionally well conducted. In all programmes, the organisers and facilitators ensured that trainings were excellently administered and impactful. The three days of writing retreats were always interactive, educational, and fun. I can truly claim I was empowered, and I have also gained the love for attending writing retreats. I aspire to leave a mark in the world of academia and be impactful by producing papers that will address issues in the education sector. Therefore, I am not willing to miss writing retreats anymore. SoTL one way.

# POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## Dr Thandi Gumede

### Short Bio

Dr Thandi Patricia Gumede, a Senior lecturer at the Department of Life Sciences, Faculty of Health, and Environmental Sciences. I hold a BSc degree in Chemistry/ Physics and Biology, BSc Honours degree in Polymer Science, MSc degree in Polymer Science, PhD in Polymer Science (CUT), recently completed PGDip in Higher Education.

### Reflection

Embarking on the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDip in HE) in 2022-2023 was a transformative journey that significantly shaped my perspective on teaching and learning as well as the impact I have on my students. Before enrolling for this course, I found myself replicating the traditional teaching methods of my own educators, a familiar path that lacked innovation. However, the diverse modules, ranging from teaching and learning principles to curriculum development, educational technology, assessment practices, research, and quality assurance, opened my eyes to a spectrum of innovative possibilities.

One of the most impactful lessons I learned in this course was the importance of adaptability in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education. The modules emphasised the need to go beyond conventional teaching approaches. They encouraged the integration of technology, dynamic assessments, and interactive teaching strategies. This shift has made the content more accessible, and it has sparked enthusiasm in my students. The feedback and messages of gratitude and acknowledgment from my students served as an affirmation of a positive impact this course has. Furthermore, witnessing students transition from perceiving Chemistry as challenging to expressing gratitude for an enjoyable learning experience is also an indication of the effectiveness of modern pedagogies. Creating a friendly and collaborative environment, where students feel comfortable to contribute and correct mistakes has become a cornerstone of my teaching philosophy.

A key takeaway from the PGDip in HE course was the acknowledgment of personal and professional weaknesses. Through this course, I have identified areas for improvement in my teaching and learning. This included learning to manage large classes and balancing the demands of teaching and postgraduate supervision. Recognizing these challenges marked the first step towards addressing them. The commitment to implement strategies for efficient management and effective time allocation has become an ongoing journey of growth.

To my fellow students, I encourage you to embrace the transformative power of education by continuously seeking opportunities for professional development. The journey may be challenging, but the rewards in seeing your students thrive and express gratitude make it all worthwhile. The PGDip in Higher Education is not just a course to be done; it is a catalyst for personal and professional growth. Let us make every lecture, assessment and interaction be an opportunity to inspire and be inspired, as we collectively shape the future of higher education.

# MY REFLECTION ON 2023 SOTL CONFERENCE



## **Mrs Bernadette Hass**

### **Short Bio**

Mrs Bernadette Hass, is a lecturer in the Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education She offers, English and English Methodology to Education students in the Faculty of Humanities. She holds a Master's degree in Linguistics. Her research interests are multidisciplinary which covers both linguistic and literary issues, Applied Language Studies, Language Education, and Multilingualism.

### **Reflection**

I attended the Annual International Conference on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in Higher Education between 05-06 October 2023. The theme of the conference for 2023: "Responding to changes in Educational Policies, Curricula and Pedagogies in Higher Education" was evident in all the different presentations focused on improving teaching through innovation ways to ensure that students succeed. All presentations were in line with both national policy and international trends such as ChatGPT and speakers contributed significantly to the current transformative discourse in higher education which included decolonising the curriculum, assessment practices, language teaching and policies.

The keynote address by Prof Micheal Van Wyk on "Generative-AI" and "ChaptGPT was an eyeopener for me as he cautioned academics about the revolutionary tool called "AI chatbot" that can produce academic texts which are indistinguishable from that of humans. As an English lecturer this was concerning and worrisome as students might easily lose the art of writing as they draw extensively from ChatGPT to compose well-written essays without conducting the necessary writing and research experience. This is a challenge as lecturers like me who might not be knowledgeable about such new technology trends will struggle to spot the difference between students' authentic work and ChatGPT generated texts. However, he highlights that apart from the risks of using ChatGPT it also introduces a new teaching philosophy where teachers can upskill their expertise to optimise the usage of chatbot. Prof. Van Wyk emphasised that if teachers are trained in ChatGPT they can utilise it to improve assessment practices, research and teaching and learning.

My presentation addressed a subtheme of the conference "Decolonising and Africanising of the curriculum" and was titled "Decolonising the teaching of Shakespearean plays in the English university curricula: An analysis of the dominant themes in Hamlet". My paper questions the relevance and presence of Shakespeare in the South African education system given the persistent calls for decolonising the school and university English curriculum through deliberate inclusion of indigenous writers and knowledge systems. The article employed a qualitative research method by drawing from the Participatory action research (PAR) as an approach to research instead of a research method. The feedback received from the audience during the conference suggested the use of Phenomenology and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an appropriate qualitative research methodology for this paper. After revisions, this paper has been accepted as a book chapter contribution in IGI Global's book titled "Revolutionizing Curricula Through Computational Thinking, Logic, and Problem Solving" which will be published in March 2024

## INDUSTRY EXPOSURE



### **Dr Mkhize- Simelane**

#### **Short Bio**

Mkhize-Simelane is a lecturer in the Tourism & Event Management Department since 2019 with a solid educational foundation from the Tshwane University of Technology, where she obtained a Diploma in 2011, a BTech in 2013 and a Master's in 2017 in Tourism Management. She furthered her academic journey at the University of Pretoria, earning a postgraduate certificate in higher education. Her research focused on sustainability and entomophagy tourism and culminated in her 2023 PhD from North-West University. She is pursuing a PG Dip in Higher Education, solidifying her dedication to improving teaching and staying current in her field.

#### **Reflection**

I just wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Department of Curriculum and Academic Support Development (CASD) and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) for their amazing support throughout my academic journey.

CASD and SOTL provided me with financial assistance for industry exposure that was instrumental in allowing me to gain industry exposure at the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB). This unforgettable experience not only broadened my horizons but also helped me bring real-world examples and practical experiences into my classroom teaching, which was invaluable. The support from these departments was a true catalyst, enriching my teaching and ensuring that my students benefited from a curriculum grounded in both theory and industry insights. In addition to that, the assistance extended to my doctoral studies was priceless. The experience gained at SANCB, with the support of CASD and SOTL, played a pivotal role in completing one chapter of my PhD. The practical knowledge and examples I garnered during industry exposure seamlessly integrated into my research, enhancing the depth and applicability of my work. Without the financial assistance and support from these departments, completing my PhD would have undoubtedly been a more prolonged and challenging journey.

CASD and SOTL organized writing retreats that were transformative experiences for me. These retreats honed my academic writing skills, emphasizing the importance of the "Golden Thread" in formal scholarly communication. The proficiency I acquired not only expedited the completion of my PhD but also played a pivotal role in the successful publication of my first book chapter. The structured and supportive environment created during these retreats fostered a culture of academic excellence. I'm also grateful for the opportunity extended to me by CASD and SOTL to contribute as a facilitator in the successful SOTL conference they hosted. This experience allowed me to share insights from my journey and engage with fellow educators in meaningful discussions about teaching and learning practices. In short, the unwavering support from CASD and SOTL has been a beacon of encouragement throughout my academic endeavours. The financial assistance, industry exposure, writing retreats, and conference opportunities have collectively shaped my professional trajectory. I am profoundly grateful for the collaborative and empowering environment these departments have created, contributing significantly to my growth as an educator, researcher, and academic.

# COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



## **Dr Ojo Olutunmise**

### **Short Bio**

Dr Ojo Olutunmise is a dedicated Visual Communication Designer who is passionate about the constantly evolving field of visual communication. His creativity is fueled by intuition, inspiration, trends, technology, and inventiveness. He has over 15 years of experience in the design industry, and I have also spent 18 years teaching various design techniques and skills in higher education.

### **Reflection**

Over the past decade, I have actively participated in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) community at the Central University of Technology. My involvement with the organisation has allowed me to grow professionally in a multitude of ways. Initially, I was fortunate enough to receive mentorship from esteemed professors, including Prof Isaac Ntshoe, Prof Sheila Matoti, and Prof Alfred Makura. Their guidance and support have been invaluable in shaping my understanding of the field of learning and teaching and refining my teaching practices.

SOTL has also played a pivotal role in my development by organising informative events, such as colloquiums, writing retreat workshops, and conferences. Additionally, I have recently been tasked with starting the Creative Community of Practice (CCoP), and our first activity is already underway. These events provided me with opportunities to learn from experts in my field, engage in critical discussions with colleagues, and develop new teaching strategies. I have always found these events to be exceptionally well-organised and informative.

In addition to attending SOTL's events, I have presented my research findings at national and international conferences funded by SOTL, allowing me to share my knowledge with colleagues from around the world. Furthermore, I have been able to apply the knowledge gained from my involvement in SOTL's academic activities to help my students at every level. This involvement has been reflected in my publication record, with some of my articles being published in DHET-accredited journals.

In summary, my experience with SOTL at the Central University of Technology has been exceptional. SOTL has enabled me to expand my knowledge, refine my teaching practices, and make meaningful contributions to the field.

# CURRICULUM DECOLONISATION PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS



## **Ms Mpho Mbele**

### **Short Bio**

Mpho Mbele is a Lecturer in the information technology department, offering technical programming (mobile development) and information technology in society modules for the third-year software development students. Coordinate work-integrated learning (WIL) for the same group of students. Also serve as chairperson for the departmental research and innovation committee (DRIC) within the department.

### **Reflection**

Participating in the recent decolonization seminars has been a transformative experience, combining discussions on decolonisation and the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. The synthesis of these two critical aspects, aimed at revolutionising South Africa's education system, has brought forth profound insights and considerations. Decolonisation, a central theme in the seminars, advocates for a paradigm shift towards fairness, inclusivity, and cultural relevance in education. It challenges us to scrutinise our curriculum, ensuring it authentically represents the diverse cultures and histories of all South Africans. Understanding that decolonisation is not merely a conceptual framework, but a practical approach is crucial, as it holds the potential to significantly enhance the educational experience for everyone involved.

Concurrently, the integration of AI offers an exciting prospect for augmenting the learning environment. AI serves as an intelligent assistant, adept at understanding individual learning styles and tailoring lessons accordingly. In the context of decolonisation, AI becomes a powerful ally, contributing to the creation of relevant, culturally diverse content that resonates with students nationwide. For those harbouring reservations about these changes, my advice is to approach the integration of decolonisation and AI with an open mind. Recognise the potential for positive transformation that these initiatives bring to education. Rather than disruptive forces, view them as tools capable of amplifying the strengths of traditional teaching methods, rendering them more effective and engaging. Furthermore, attending similar seminars and programmes is strongly encouraged. These platforms for me served as a collaborative space for shared experiences and ideas. Actively participating in such seminars not only contributes to the ongoing dialogue but also equips lecturers with practical knowledge and strategies applicable in their unique teaching contexts.

In conclusion, the seminars have illuminated a pathway towards a more inclusive, culturally rich, and technologically advanced education system. Embracing change with enthusiasm, the blending of decolonisation and AI has the potential to create an educational environment that authentically reflects and uplifts the diversity of South Africa. I urge all colleagues to actively engage in such programmes, as they provide a unique opportunity for professional growth and contribute to the collective effort to shape the future of education in our nation. All of this must start with a mindset that is more than willing to see that we do not only produce students who leave our institution with content in their minds, but they have also gained knowledge that will not depart from their minds.

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CHAT GPT INDABA



**Ms Nomfundo Khoza**

## **Short bio**

Nomfundo Gladys Khoza is a full-time lecturer at the Central University of Technology and a PhD candidate. Focusing on curriculum development for higher education institution, she serves as a member of undergraduate quality assurance committee evaluation of examination papers and memorandums in the Faculty of Management Sciences. For internationalisation of a curriculum at HEIs, she is an active member of Ikudu-COIL project which emphasises in creating innovative graduate, Citizenship and Global leadership of students.

## **Reflection**

Engaging with ChatGPT and participating in the AI Indaba, organized by the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, has been an enlightening experience. These digital platforms have proven to be invaluable tools in the realm of education and artificial intelligence. Through ChatGPT, the capability to provide instant and relevant information to users across diverse subjects has been a game-changer. It emphasises the importance of leveraging AI to enhance teaching and learning experiences, offering a glimpse into the future of education where technology seamlessly integrates with traditional methodologies.

Participating in the AI Indaba has underscored the significance of staying abreast of the latest advancements in AI. The workshop served as a melting pot of ideas, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among educators and professionals. The lessons learned extend beyond technical insights into AI; they delve into the transformative power of integrating innovative technologies into curriculum design and teaching methodologies.

The experience motivates colleagues to embrace these digital platforms for several reasons. Firstly, the instantaneous nature of ChatGPT allows educators to provide timely and accurate information, catering to the diverse needs of students. Secondly, the AI Indaba serves as a testament to the collaborative spirit within the academic community, emphasising the need for continuous learning and adaptation to technological advancements. By incorporating these digital tools, colleagues can not only enhance their teaching capabilities but also contribute to shaping the future of education by staying at the forefront of technological evolution.

In essence, the combination of ChatGPT and participation in the AI Indaba organised by the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Centre has illuminated the transformative potential of AI in education. It motivates educators to embrace these digital platforms, fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration that ultimately benefits both educators and learners in the evolving landscape of academia.

# PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

## Ms Ramosoeu Makhabo

### Short Bio

Ramosoeu Makhabo is a Mechanical Engineering lecturer at CUT, She holds a Master's in Mechanical Engineering and is about to finish a higher-education postgraduate diploma. I have over a decade of teaching experience in higher education, enriched by seven years of industrial hands-on engineering and safety roles. Dedicated to lifelong learning, my way of life emphasises reading for knowledge and problem-solving.

### Reflection

After the workshop, I realised that lecturer's journeys are dynamic and gratifying. The workshop included teaching portfolios, philosophies, tactics, and assessments. These are essential for academics, especially in the changing education context. Creating and refining a teaching portfolio in the workshop was a great learning experience. This approach was about introspection and creating one's teaching philosophy, not just gathering prior achievements. This philosophy guides our teaching, student interactions, and assessment. Academics generally prioritise content competence, but the session reminded us that teaching and student involvement are just as important.



The workshop's focus on teaching methodologies, especially technology and interactive methods, was insightful. In our fast-paced, digital era, such methods are essential. They make learning more fun and accommodate our students' different learning methods. Aligning teaching techniques, learning activities assessments and feedback were thoroughly explained. The balance between assessing student learning and using assessments to learn is crucial. It's about helping students learn, not simply grading. Workshop participants learned the benefits of ongoing growth and feedback. Feedback from peers, students, and self-reflection is essential for educator progress. The cycle of learning, teaching, receiving feedback, and developing never ends but enriches.

Finally, the workshop reinforced our educational roles. We are mentors, lifelong learners, and knowledge carriers. As one progresses in academia, one realises that one's influence on students extends beyond the classroom. Passion, dedication, and pursuit of teaching excellence inspire students, colleagues, professionals, and clients we serve to solve their societal needs.

## IKUDU – COIL PROJECT



### **Ms Tsholofelo Tshabadira**

#### **Short Bio**

Tsholofelo Tshabadira is a junior lecturer in the Design and Studio Art Department in the Faculty of Humanities. She holds a National Diploma in Graphic Design, a BTech in Graphic Design and is also an MTECH Design Candidate. She plays a variety of roles as a COIL and RPL and Articulation Champion in the Faculty of Humanities, Teaching and Learning Coordinator in her Department as well as Quality Assurance Practitioner and a member of the European Association for International Education.

#### **Reflection**

I am a passionate academic about the teaching and learning role in my faculty as well as exposing her students to broader boundaries. Being part of the IKUDU COIL (Collaborative International Learning) Project has enabled my to acquire vast skills in transforming and renewing the curriculum. In my role of being a sub—committee Chairperson advocates that academics should be able to enhance their learning and teaching by developing innovative aspects within their curriculum. IKUDU COIL project is an EU-funded Capacity Building in Higher Education project. COIL connects accredited courses, linking the classrooms of two or more higher education institutions, each located in a different country or cultural setting.

The COIL model does more than promote students from different countries sharing information in an online classroom. COIL creates equitable lean-taught learning environments where faculty from two or more cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasizing experiential and collaborative learning. IKUDU COIL provides workshops to assist in developing learning outcomes as well as developing a COIL Plan with your COIL partner. I have had the privilege of collaborating with enthusiastic and determined partners, she has a great understanding of what is expected. Engagements of COIL can be done by using any form of digital platform. Since 2021 I have successfully collaborated with The Hague University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands on three COIL projects that involved disciplines of journalism and digital communication in the Department of International Communication Management. One of the COIL projects has a blog that is quite interesting to read which elaborates on Cross-Cultural Aspects of Gossip in South Africa.

I have given a Guest Lecture at the Hague University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands to educate journalism students on the process of design thinking process. This lecture enabled the students to learn the thought process designs, which involve creativity, innovation and re-iteration. I have greatly been part of Florida International University, Miami, a COIL project that is not part of IKUDU but has received great reviews. The project was based on Who Women Are in the context of art. I have continued to promote South African Women Artists as well as crucial themes that women face in the country in the Guest Lecture. The project received great reviews as students' works were exhibited at the Green Library, in Miami. In general, all projects involve multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and intradisciplinary aspects. COIL assists students with critical thinking, intercultural, and interpersonal skills. I am looking forward to further collaborations with international universities and more CUT academics joining the network of COIL..

# SCHOLARLY BOOK WRITING RETREAT



## **Dr Lucien Lezar**

### **Short Bio**

Lucien Lezar is a departmental manager in the Business Support Studies Department for the Faculty of Management Sciences, Welkom Campus. His area of expertise includes Project Management, Applied Management, Office Management & Technology, Cultural Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Psychological wellbeing, Social wellbeing, Thriving and Flourishing in the workplace, Diversity Management, Organisational Management. He published two articles, a book chapter, made six conference presentations (5 International and 1 National), a Keynote address and one published co-supervised masters study in my 6 and a half years academic practitioner in the higher education environment.

### **Reflection**

The three-day writing retreat was an eye opener in so many ways and created a focused and immersive writing environment, minimising distractions and allowing for deep concentration. Instead of sitting and trying to process the loads and loads of information, this session rather had us exploring unique ways of grasping and expressing those inner thoughts in a more subtle writing style. It created a space for focused and intentional processing, resulting in a sense of relief and culminating the usual way of how to approach and set up a proper article and book chapter. Prof Mggwashu was brilliant throughout his sessions and would therefore commend it to colleagues and students at any time as it sparks creativity, instils a sense of accomplishment, and surely boosts confidence and motivation for effective article and chapter writing. Academics who seek to positively contribute to the academia should see this as a powerful tool for personal and professional development in the realm of academic and creative writing.

## MY ENRICHING EXPERIENCE



### **Dr Parks Makhoahle**

In 2023 CASD embarked on a huge turn by availing opportunities for staff members to empower themselves, I, Dr. Parks Makhoahle, Senior Lecturer and Assurant Residence Manager of Graduandi House, took the opportunity to learn more about Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) through participation in COP lead by Dr Khetsha. COP resulted in two published articles in peer reviewed journal, two papers presented during the SOTL 2023 conference and best presentation at MUT WIL conference. This wouldn't be achievable if it wasn't three writing retreat opportunities organised by CASD whereby each event led to generation of a manuscript.

Furthermore, CASD presented an opportunity for co-authored book chapter(s) through on going coaching by Dr X Khohliso and Prof Mgqwashu from NWU which will result in a CUT scholarly textbook that will shape teaching and learning across multidisciplinary interfaculty. CASD identifies potential in everyone, I was offered the opportunity to present the best POE talk at a CASD workshop, sharing insights on compiling the best POE under the category of CE (community engagement) for the VC award as one of the recipients of such prestige prize. Embracing technological advancements, my attendance at a CASD-organized AI event resulted in two published papers in reputable international peer-reviewed journals.

It's worth mentioning that Our COP's collaborative efforts led to paper acceptance at the WIL24 conference between CUT and Sweden, as well as an abstract acceptance at the International Consortium for Educational Development 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. It's being an exciting academic journey! I have learned that whether you're a seasoned educator, a researcher, or someone eager to delve into the realms of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) and Curriculum and Academic Staff Development (CASD), there's room for everyone.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



## Mrs Abigail Edem

### Short bio

Abigail Edem is a Curriculum and Academic Staff developer at the Centre for Innovation in learning and teaching (CILT). She holds Masters in Curriculum Studies. Her primary interests are in sustaining present environmental resources for the needs of the future generations and that has stimulated her intellectual curiosity in SD in the curriculum.

### Reflection

The Central University of Technology aspires, through its strategic document of the Vision 2030, -to become a leading University of Technology and an Isle of innovation. In furtherance to this, the institution aims to produce industry-ready graduates who can contribute significantly to community, regional and societal development. Such attainment would place the University in the league of globally renowned sustainable universities. To attain this objective, there is a need to align with institutions with an established reputation of sustainability-in-curriculum activities to not only benchmark our on-going experiences at CUT but to also share such experiences with them whilst learning about global best practice. Such universities amongst others are University of London and De Montfort University in Leicester.

The Unit of International office at De Monfort University Leicester has agreed to collaborate with CUT in the forming MOU. The process will be set in motion as soon as possible. The University of London is willing to co-collaboration with CUT in developing short course for university academic staff, focusing on how to embed sustainable development principles into the extant curricula as soon as funds are made available.

A visitation was made to De Montfort University in Leicester, UK. During the visit, I was able to engage with relevant colleagues regarding the strides made at their university concerning:

- Establishment between the two universities in embedding sustainable development principles into the curricula.
- Frameworks for selecting the appropriate pedagogical approaches for delivering sustainability competences to students across various disciplines.
- The proven methods for assessing sustainability competences acquired by the students.
- Other education for sustainable development initiatives that have been developed and applied towards enhancing sustainability literacy levels among the students at De Montfort University.

Knowledge gained from the University of De Montfort Leicester

The university approaches SD and Education for Sustainability in three different areas:

- a) Sustainable Development in the Curriculum focusing on
  - Student
  - Staff
  - Approaches / Pedagogies
  - Industries / Environment
- b) Internalization Office
  - Collaborates with other universities especially Africa.
  - Engages students/staff in solving the problems in their different environments.
- c) Work with external organizations such UNESCO in solving themes / SDGs goals.
- d) Development of Learner's guide for CUT academic staff is in progress. It will be made available by March 2024.

As we continue to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of education, let us remain steadfast in our pursuit of excellence and our unwavering belief in the power of education to shape a better tomorrow. Let us embrace collaboration, creativity, and adaptability as we strive to meet the diverse needs of our learners and prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

## ACTIVE PARTNERS OF CASD & SOTL



### **Prof James Swart**

#### **Short Bio**

James completed his MEd in 2007 and his DTech in 2011. His educational research focuses on the effective use of educational technology to improve student engagement while his field discipline research focuses on energy monitoring. James has close to 200 publications in these fields and holds the motto that “consistency is often a mark of quality”.

#### **Reflection**

Within Engineering Education Development, I was privileged to work along with seven fellow colleagues (mentees within the SoTL programme) during 2023 from different departments at CUT in reporting on a specific aspect of their teaching practice. This helped me to broaden my own knowledge of various concepts that are linked to education, such as the software development life cycle and of what makes a good teacher. The colleagues were also able to improve their conceptualisation of an article earmarked for a journal in education.

Within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, I have the honour of working with the local organizing committee of our annual SoTL conference at CUT. In 2023, we received 91 abstracts, of which 30 were dedicated to the promotion of quality teaching and learning. It was thrilling to renew old friendships, to engage in-person, to share a meal, to embrace our local arts and culture, and to refine our perceptions of other disciplines. The conference indeed proved to be refreshing, reinvigorating, and rewarding to attend.

Within the Unit of Curriculum and Academic Staff Development, I was privileged to share in two workshops that focused on the development of a teaching portfolio. In one workshop, the personal engagement with more than 20 colleagues was awesome as we put into practice the theoretical concepts which we shared. We reviewed the teaching philosophy that must include the words “I believe” and we considered the inclusion of various types of evidence to support our teaching practice. Gathering and storing evidence of one’s own practice remains a key requirement in the effective development of such portfolios.

All in all, the year 2023 was outstanding in furthering the aims of education, which includes the upliftment of individuals to enjoy a better quality of life, both for themselves and their families. I believe that we will again achieve this aim in 2024 by working harmoniously together. An African proverb states “If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together”.

# ACTIVE PARTNER OF CASD



## Dr Zenzile Khetsha

### Short Bio

Zenzile Khetsha is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Agriculture, Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences. His primary field of study is agriculture, specializing in Plant Production. He is also a recognized scholar and a groomed leader in Higher Education. He recently obtained a fellowship with the Teaching Advancement at Universities Fellowship.

### Reflection

My reflection on Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) as a teacher and emerging leader has always been based on the notion of constant development as a scholar in one's expertise and as a teacher. Therefore, in becoming a reflective teacher in the Higher Education (HE) space, I have always believed that one's primary expertise becomes secondary as becoming a teacher is primarily from the heart. As Paulo Freire mentioned: "Education must be centred upon developing critically conscious, 'humanized', learners who act to liberate themselves, and the world, from injustice"; it became my responsibility as a reflective teacher to humanise the pedagogy, and to date, all my accomplishments as a scholar in higher education are attributed to CASD/CILT.

My journey started in 2015 when I established my teaching philosophy at Rhodes University through CherTL. As a stubborn hard-applied scientist at the time, introduction to soft studies felt unthinkable. However, today, I openly regard myself as a reflective leading teacher, and with the entrusted capacity by CASD/CILT, I mentor five colleagues in hard sciences through the SoTL Mentorship. At least four conference papers were presented, with an award for the best paper with a mentee, Dr Makhoahle, and this paper was published in the DHET-accredited journal, 2023. Moreover, I am a fellow with a prestigious Teaching Advancement at Universities Fellowship, endorsed by DHET and HELTASA, through CASD/CILT.

My recent experiences with CASD/CILT further assisted me in establishing and developing my stance as an emerging leader in the HE, particularly at the CUT. Between 2022 and 2023, having been entrusted to act as an Assistant Dean: Teaching and Learning (T&L) twice in a row in the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, I was further afforded opportunities to participate in the process of benchmarking and advancing the institutional T&L strategies with other global applied universities through the HERESA Study Visit and Strategy Development (2022) and the Technical Assistance Missions (TAMs) Programme (2023) funded and supported by THENSA and CASD/CILT. During this period, I reflected meaningfully on my leadership development (LD) journey in line with the completed PGDip LD (Stellenbosch University), particularly during the TAMs workshop with Prof Viktor Kordas (KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden) that was held between the 4th and 7th September 2023. Amongst the higher-order discussions in this workshop, highlights were the reflections with all faculties on the espoused T&L strategy advancement and the uptake of the institutional values and culture as embedded in the CUT Vision 2030.

Lastly, I came to realise that as an emerging leader, knowing that I have all the pillars of academia balanced, I attribute all to the T&L developments in my leadership pipeline journey to CASD/CILT and will remain a developing scholar.

## 2024 DRAFT ACTIVITIES

The Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit is pleased to share the 2024 activities designed for our staff;

Activity	Date	Time	Topic	Venue
<b>Term 1</b>				
SoTL General Meeting	20 February	14:00 – 16:00	SoTL Expectations and Deliverables	Virtual/Training room
Academic Staff Induction	21-23 February	08:00 – 15:00	Teaching and Learning Theories, Curriculum, Assessment techniques, Quality and Work Integrated learning.	Off campus
PGDIPHE Block Sessions	26 Feb-01 March	08:00 – 16:00	Teaching and Learning (Y1) / Assessment in HE (Y2)	CILT Training room / E-learning
SoTL workshop	12 March	14:00 – 16:00	Classroom Action research workshop Part 1	Virtual/Training room
Developing of question papers & memorandum	14 March	14:00 – 16:00	Mastering the Art of Question Paper Design and Effective Memorandum Development	Virtual/Training room
Writing retreat	18 – 20 March	08:00 – 16:00	Article writing	Outside campus
<b>Term 2</b>				
Curriculum alignment to programme	03 April	14:00 – 16:00	Curriculum Design and Constructive Alignment for Effective Program Development	Virtual/ Training room
SoTL Workshop	15 April	14:00 – 16:00	Communities of Practices Part 1	Virtual/ Training room
Sustainable Development in Curriculum P1	23 April	14:00 – 16:00	Assessing the Curriculum for Sustainability Integration	Virtual/ Training room
Awareness around curricula transformation and innovation	24 April	12:00 – 16:00	Incorporating Student Feedback in Curricula Transformation	Prosperitas Auditorium
Writing retreat	6 – 8 May	08:00 – 16:00	Article writing	Outside campus

PGDIPHE Block Sessions	22 – 24 May	08:00 – 16:00	Technology in Learning and Teaching (Y2)	CILT Training room
<b>Term 3</b>				
Curriculum Decolonization Practical Workshop	05 July	12:00 - 16:00	Transformative Pedagogies and Inclusive Practices	On Campus
SoTL Workshop	11 July	09:00 – 14:00 / 14:00 – 16:00	Classroom Action Research Workshop Part 2	Virtual/ Training room
PGDIPHE Block Sessions	29 July – 02 August	08:00 – 16:00	Curriculum Development (Y1) / Quality Assurance in HE (Y2)	CILT Training room / E-Learning
Artificial Intelligence & Technologies	22 August	08:00 – 16:00	The use of Artificial Intelligence in Assessment	On Campus
Sustainable Development in Curriculum 2	05 September	14:00 – 16:00	Creating a Sustainable Learning Community	Virtual/ Training room
SoTL Workshop	12 September	14:00 – 16:00	Communities of Practices Part 2	Virtual/ Training room
Portfolio of Evidence Workshop	19/20 September	08:00 – 16:00	Crafting Effective Academic Portfolios: Showcasing Professional Development and Impact	Outside campus
<b>Term 4</b>				
PGDIPHE Block Sessions	30 September – 02 October	08:00 – 16:00	Research on Learning and Teaching (Y2)	CILT Training room
SoTL Conference	2 – 4 October	08:00 – 16:00	SOTL in Higher Education	Japie van Lill auditorium
Writing retreat	23 -25 October	08:00 – 16:00	Article writing	Outside campus
PGDIPHE Block Sessions	07 - 09 October	08:00 – 16:00	Work Integrated Learning (Y2)	CILT Training room

# WELCOME TO CUT MR BONGANI MASHABA



The Deputy Director for Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit, Dr Xolani Khohliso, extends his warm welcome to the newly appointed Curriculum and Academic Staff Developer. Mr Bongani Mashaba holds an M. Ed in Curriculum Policy Evaluation, B. Ed Honours in Curriculum Studies, B. Ed specialised in English and History from the University of Johannesburg where he also worked as a facilitator and coordinator for almost ten years, responsible for curriculum development, staff development, student feedback, postgraduate diploma in higher education etc. Before transitioning to higher education in 2014, he worked as a high school teacher in Johannesburg for four years. His academic interests are in the areas of curriculum development and change in higher education, portfolio development, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, enhancing epistemological access, teaching and learning and student feedback.

## Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the following individuals for their valuable contributions and support. Mr. Ali and Ms. Mopeli, their administrative contributions have truly made a significant difference in the unit, and we are deeply grateful for your contributions.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the leaders of Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching and its various units: Student Academic Development Support, Special Projects, e-Learning and Educational Technology, and the Disability Unit. Your leadership and vision have been instrumental in fostering a culture of innovation and inclusivity within our academic programs. Your initiatives have not only enhanced the quality of education we espouse and provide, but, ensured equal opportunities for all students to succeed.

We would like to express our gratitude to the offices of the Faculty Deans, and the Assistant Deans for Teaching and Learning for outstanding leadership in assisting our academic and support staff members in achieving pedagogical excellence. Your guidance and encouragement have enabled our academic and support staff members involved in SoTL to improve their methods of instruction on a constant basis, giving our students more engaging educational experiences.

Thank you, Ms. Dire, for your remarkable efforts. Your dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment have significantly contributed to the success of our team and the achievement of our organisational goals.

Lastly, we would like to thank Mr. Charles Mothibenyane from the Alumni Affairs on designing this newsletter. His commitment and willingness to help is duly noted.

# Editor's Note: Newsletter Update from the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit



Dear CUT community,

We are delighted to present the first edition of our newsletter, highlighting the innovative initiatives and ongoing efforts of the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit. In this edition, we aim to provide you with insightful updates on the diverse range of activities and programs organized by the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching. From professional development workshops to SoTL conferences, as well as curriculum enhancements, we strive to support the growth and success of our academic staff members and students.

As you peruse through the newsletter, you will find engaging articles, success stories, and upcoming events that showcase the dedication and hard work of our team members and the positive impact of their contributions on our academic community.

We encourage you to explore the various sections of the newsletter and take advantage of the resources and opportunities presented. Your feedback and suggestions are invaluable to us as we continue to refine and expand our offerings to better serve the needs of CUT community and our external stakeholders.

Thank you for your continued support and participation in the endeavors of the Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit. Together, we are committed to fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

I trust you enjoyed the reading!

Warm regards,

Papi Lemeko  
Editor-in-Chief



Central University of  
Technology, Free State



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**20 YEARS OF  
THINKING BEYOND**