SAQAN Conference

6th SOUTHERN AFRICA QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK (SAQAN) CONFERENCE

Hosted by:

Higher Education Authority-Zambia

Radisson Blu Hotel, Livingstone, Zambia

25th – 27th September 2024

CONFERENCE THEME:

Strengthening and harmonising quality assurance in the SADC region and beyond through sharing experiences and good practices.

https://saqan.org/conference

1. Objectives of the SAQAN Conference

The main objective of the Annual SAQAN conference is to bring together quality assurance practitioners and researchers in the SADC region and beyond to share experiences, best practices and approaches towards promoting the culture of quality assurance in Higher Education. It is also intended to serve as a platform for exchanging research findings pertaining to quality assurance, promotion and development.

2. Theme of the 6th SAQAN Conference

Strengthening and harmonising quality assurance in the SADC region and beyond through sharing experiences and good practices.

Quality assurance (QA) in higher education has become a global phenomenon. Its growth is due to several factors, such as the massification of Higher Education (HE), competition, privatisation, the emergence of several modes of HE delivery, such as open and distance learning, and an increase in cross-border education, which in some cases may have led to questionable standards of HE. As part of the global growth in QA, continental and global agencies have been set up, some of them as business enterprises and some of them as statutory national agencies. For example, European Union countries came together to establish the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG–QA) in 2005. More recently, in 2019, the African Union established the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance for Higher Education (ASG–QA). The ASG–QA are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education institutions in Africa. The rapid growth in the number of higher education institutions, including private higher education institutions and the establishment of quality assurance agencies has called for the need to strengthen and harmonise quality assurance systems nationally, regionally and globally. For example, the ASG-QA (2019) document maintains that harmonised QA systems in HE is imperative for Africa to realise the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. The African Union (AU) has, at the highest level, called for the harmonisation and strengthening of the quality of higher education in Africa to make it both locally relevant and globally competitive.

The preceding is consistent with the AU's Agenda 2063: "The Africa We Want" and is an essential instrument for facilitating the recently signed AU Continental Free Trade Area. These efforts culminate in Africa's long-time desire for harmonised HE systems that can facilitate the mobility of trained people with accredited qualifications. The ASG document further notes that diverse HE

systems on the continent have resulted in the challenges regarding mutual recognition of university qualifications, constraining academic integration and the mobility of students across the African continent. The mutual recognition of qualifications aligns with the Addis Ababa Convention of 2015 on the recognition of qualifications on the continent. The convention establishes a legal framework for a fair and transparent and non-discriminatory assessment/recognition of qualifications in Africa in order to facilitate cooperation and inter-institution exchanges through the mobility of students, researchers, and staff. It results from long-standing cooperation between UNESCO and the African Union to support the African Union's Strategy for harmonisation of HE programmes. The Addis Ababa Convention creates a binding agreement around the norms and standards for formal procedures recognising foreign HE qualifications and those providing access to higher education institutions in Africa.

The Addis Ababa convention also seeks to enhance quality assurance systems in HE on the continent. Robust QA systems are critical in assessing qualifications for recognition. The bodies tasked to assess these qualifications should know the QA system of an institution where the qualification was obtained. The Addis Convention emphasises the need to strengthen higher education quality by enhancing internal and external quality assurance systems.

Collective endorsement of harmonisation and mutual recognition presupposes increased attention to quality and quality assurance in higher education. The rapid growth in the number of students and higher education institutions and the increased focus on employability have also highlighted the importance of quality and quality assurance. If Africa's investment in the education of its youth is to reap demographic dividends, quality and quality assurance in higher education and training are essential.

In view of the foregoing, sharing experiences and good practices in QA is critical for Africa to strengthen and harmonise its quality assurance systems. Indeed, sharing best practices and experiences in quality assurance in higher education is a collaborative and collective effort that benefits institutions, professionals, and students alike and is one way of facilitating harmonisation. It promotes a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and accountability, leading to quality higher education and better student outcomes.

Sub-Themes
1. External quality assurance of blended and online programmes and qualifications, including fields where most of the work is of a practical nature.

2.	Internal quality assurance of blended and online programmes and qualifications, including in fields where most of the work is of a practical nature.
3.	Impact of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence on Quality Assurance in higher education.
4.	Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning.
5.	Experiences and proposals for internalising the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA) and the Continental Qualifications Framework.
6.	Experiences and proposals for using African Open Educational Resources (OERs) and microcredentials.
7.	The role in of data, and data analytics (for example through implementation of graduate tracer studies) in Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
8.	Contextualising Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

2024 Conference Paper Options

1. **Long Papers**		
Word Count: Abstract: 100-150 words Full Long Paper: up to 6000 words, excluding abstract but including references	**Submission deadline by:** 29 March 2024 Email to: saqan.conference@hea.org.zm	**Final Submission date for re-worked papers:** 04 June 2024. Email to saqan.conference@hea.org.zm
Format: Similar to articles/papers required by journals, i.e., abstract, introduction, literature review/conceptual framework, theoretical framework, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion. Please indicate the corresponding author if there is more than one author.		
Reviewing Process: 1. Long papers are reviewed by at least two qualified peer reviewers. On completion the corresponding author is advised of the outcome. 2. If the paper is accepted with modifications, the re-worked paper(s) must be submitted as noted above to saqan.conference@hea.org.zm by 04 June 2024. 3. The Review Panel presumes that: the paper is original; permission has been granted by all authors to have the paper presented at the 6th SAQAN conference. 4. At least one of the authors is registered and attends the conference to present the accepted paper. 5. The author's details shall be removed before submission to reviewers by the Organising Committee.		

6. Long papers presented at the conference will be considered for publication in the first edition of the *SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, which will be launched at the conference.

Presentation of Accepted paper, Programme Requirements

1. By 15 July 2024, author(s) with accepted long papers are required to prepare and submit:

    1.1 Paper PowerPoint presentation slides

    1.2 Present the paper during the thematic programme sessions. Authors are expected to briefly introduce themselves to the delegates and present their paper and respond to questions from the floor during the Q and A session.

2. Short Papers

Word Count:	Submission deadline by:	Final Submission date for re-worked papers:
Abstract: 100-150 words Full Short Paper: 1700 words (excluding Abstract but including Reference list)	29 March 2024 Email to: saqan.conference@hea.org.zm	04 June 2024. Email to saqan.conference@hea.org.zm

Format: Similar to short papers required by journals, i.e., abstract, introduction, literature review/conceptual framework, theoretical framework, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion. Short papers should highlight the preliminary findings and the significance of the research. Please indicate the corresponding author if there is more than one author.

Reviewing Process:

1. Short papers are reviewed by at least two qualified peer reviewers. On completion the corresponding author is advised of the outcome.

2. If the short paper is accepted with modifications, the re-worked paper(s) must be submitted as noted above to saqan.conference@hea.org.zm by 04 June 2024.

3. The Review Panel presumes that: the paper is original; permission has been granted by all authors to have the paper presented at the 6th SAQAN conference.

4. At least one of the authors is registered and attends the conference to present the accepted short paper.

5. The author's details shall be removed before submission to reviewers by the Organising Committee.

Presentation of Accepted short paper, Programme Requirements

1. By 15 July 2024, author(s) with accepted short papers are required to prepare and submit:

    1.1 Paper PowerPoint presentation slides

1.2 Present the short paper during the thematic programme sessions. Authors are expected to briefly introduce themselves to the delegates and present their paper and respond to questions from the floor during the Q and A session.

2. Poster Papers

Word Count:	Submission deadline by:	Final Submission date for re-worked papers:
Abstract: 100-150 words	29 March 2024	04 June 2024.
Full Poster: 1 500 words	Email to:	Email to:
	saqan.conference@hea.org.zm	saqan.conference@hea.org.zm

Poster Paper Content:

A word document providing an outline of the content of the poster. Corresponding author details must be indicated if there is more than one author.

1. Reviewing Process: Reviewers look for interesting topics for further research with content that illustrates the main features of the research.
2. The author's details shall be removed before submission to reviewers by the Organising Committee.

Presentation Requirements:

1. Presenters are required to bring a standard poster to the conference.
2. A session for poster presentation shall be allocated during the Conference programme.
3. Presenters are required to be present to present their posters and interact with delegates.

REGISTRATION FEES

SADC and International Participants	USD350-00
Local Participants	USD200-00

Request for an invoice from: finance@hea.org.zm

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