



iYunivesithi

Walter Sisulu



Faculty of Education

Newsletter

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Walter Sisulu

Education

INNOVATE • INSPIRE • IMPACT

AI Research Webinar on Scholarly Publishing

On 1 July 2026, the faculty, through the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) Department, hosted an online research webinar on Microsoft Teams titled Using AI to Generate Articles from your Dissertation or Thesis. The webinar was facilitated by Prof A. Brown and focused on the ethical use of artificial intelligence tools to transform postgraduate dissertations and theses into publishable journal articles.

The webinar explored practical strategies for using AI to support the writing and publication process while maintaining academic integrity. Discussions highlighted how AI can assist researchers in identifying publishable sections of their dissertations or theses, refining academic writing, improving manuscript structure, and selecting suitable journals, while emphasising that AI should complement, rather than replace, the researcher's critical thinking and scholarly contribution.

The webinar formed part of the faculty's ongoing efforts to strengthen research capacity and support postgraduate students and academics in adopting responsible and innovative approaches to scholarly publishing.

Research Webinar on Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

On 3 July 2026, an online Research Webinar under the theme, "Strengthening Research through Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks," was held. The webinar, presented via Microsoft Teams, aimed to strengthen researchers' understanding of conceptual and theoretical frameworks and their role in producing rigorous, high-quality research.

The keynote presentation was delivered by Prof Sitwala Imenda, a distinguished scholar with extensive experience in research methodology, teacher education, and higher education leadership. He guided postgraduate students and academic staff through the purpose and application of research frameworks, the selection of appropriate theoretical frameworks, the development of conceptual frameworks, and the key differences between the two. Interactive question-and-answer sessions provided 107 participants with an opportunity to engage with the presenter and clarify common challenges encountered in research design.

The webinar formed part of the faculty's ongoing commitment to enhancing postgraduate research capacity and supporting academic excellence by equipping researchers with the knowledge and skills required to produce methodologically sound research.



Short Learning Programmes



On 6 July 2026, a notice was issued announcing three Short Learning Programmes (SLPs) aimed at strengthening the professional knowledge and practice of academics working in higher education. These programmes form part of the faculty's commitment to advancing teaching excellence, curriculum innovation, and quality assurance in higher education. The programmes offered through contact and/or online are Blended Learning Pedagogies (delivery from 21-23 July 2026); Curriculum Development and Transformation (delivery from 18-20 August 2026); and Assessment in Higher Education (delivery from 15-17 September 2026). The programmes target academics in higher education and aim to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to develop, review, and transform curricula that are responsive to contemporary educational needs and societal priorities. Each Short Learning Programme (SLP) has a maximum capacity of 30 participants. Staff members are therefore encouraged to apply as soon as possible before all spaces are filled. Funding to support participation may also be applied for through the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG).

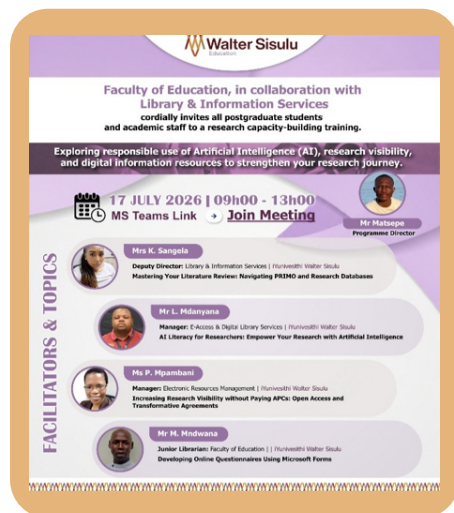
Through these Short Learning Programmes, the faculty continues to promote continuous professional development by providing accessible, flexible, and relevant learning opportunities that support academic excellence and innovation in higher education.

Virtual Postgraduate Proposal Defence Seminar

On 6 July 2026, the Faculty of Education's Faculty Research Higher Degrees Committee (FRHDC), in collaboration with the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) Department, hosted a Virtual Postgraduate Proposal Defence Seminar. The seminar provided postgraduate students with an opportunity to present and defend their research proposals before receiving constructive academic feedback from faculty members and peers.

The programme featured presentations by seven postgraduate students, comprising three PhD candidates and four Master of Education (MEd) students.

The second a Virtual Postgraduate Proposal Defense Seminar was held on the 30 July 2026. Six Master of Education (MEd) students presented research proposals covering a range of contemporary educational topics, including digital pedagogies, inclusive education, mentoring programmes, blended learning, curriculum implementation, and teacher readiness to implement educational policies. The seminar was attended by 73 participants, including postgraduate students, academic staff, supervisors, and presenters from across the Faculty of Education. The virtual format enabled broad participation from different campuses, supporting collaboration and knowledge sharing while strengthening the faculty's postgraduate research culture.



Faculty Strengthens Research Capacity Through AI and Digital Scholarship Training

As part of its commitment to strengthening research excellence and supporting postgraduate success, the faculty, in collaboration with Library and Information Services (LIS), hosted a virtual Research Capacity-Building Training for postgraduate students and academic staff. The training focused on equipping participants with contemporary research skills, including the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), research visibility, and digital information resources to enhance scholarly productivity.

The programme featured a series of expert-led presentations delivered by Library and Information Services specialists. Mrs K. Sangela, Deputy Director: Library and Information Services, presented a session on Mastering Your Literature Review:

Navigating PRIMO and Research Databases, providing practical guidance on locating, evaluating, and managing scholarly literature. Mr L. Mdanyana, Manager: E-Access and Digital Library Services, introduced participants to AI Literacy for Researchers, demonstrating how Artificial Intelligence can be used responsibly to support research while maintaining academic integrity. Ms P. Mpambani, Manager: Electronic Resources Management, shared strategies for Increasing Research Visibility without Paying Article Processing Charges (APCs) by making effective use of open-access publishing opportunities and transformative agreements. The final presentation, delivered by Mr M. Mndwana, Junior Librarian in the Faculty of Education, focused on Developing Online Questionnaires Using Microsoft Forms, equipping participants with practical skills for designing and administering digital research instruments.

The training highlighted the faculty's ongoing commitment to developing the research capabilities of both staff and postgraduate students by promoting digital scholarship, responsible AI use, and access to high-quality research resources. Through collaborations such as this, the Faculty of Education continues to foster a research culture that embraces innovation, enhances research quality, and supports increased scholarly impact in line with the University's strategic objectives

Open Education Resource (OER) champions workshop

The faculty successfully launched its Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative during a Champions Workshop held on 20-21 July 2026. The initiative, championed by the Executive Dean, brought together representatives from all six FED departments, with three participants from each department. The primary objective of the workshop was to capacitate departmental champions with the skills required to develop and implement OER within their teaching practices.

The workshop was conducted in partnership with the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), with additional institutional support provided under the leadership of Mr Lungile Mdanyana, Manager: E-Access and Digital Library Services. This collaboration not only strengthened

inter-institutional partnerships between FED and the Wits School of Education but also enhanced the faculty's capacity to advance open and accessible learning resources.

A key outcome of the workshop was the successful development and publication of eight OERs, with technical and strategic support from Mr Mdanyana. These resources are intended to be integrated into teaching and learning activities in the second semester, with students also expected to actively engage in and contribute to OER development processes.

Furthermore, on 30 July 2026, the faculty participated in an SADC OER Webinar, where FED was among the institutions that presented progress on OER implementation. Other participating institutions included the University of the Witwatersrand, as well as universities from Botswana and Mauritius. This engagement positioned FED within a broader regional network committed to advancing open education practices.



Teaching Practice External Assessors Orientation and Induction



The faculty is piloting a project for Teaching Practice External Assessors intended to strengthen the quality assurance processes for assessing student teachers during their school-based teaching practice. The retired external assessors have been selected based on their relevant qualifications, professional expertise, and experience in teacher education and school-based assessment. Their duties in accordance with the Faculty's Teaching Practice policies, WIL Guidelines, assessment guidelines, and quality assurance requirements include, but not be limited to, conducting independent assessments of student teachers in schools, moderating teaching practice assessments where applicable, ensuring that assessment practices are fair, valid, reliable, and consistent, providing constructive professional feedback to student teachers, verifying the application of approved assessment instruments and criteria, maintaining accurate assessment records, submitting completed assessment reports within the prescribed timeframes, and contributing to the continuous enhancement of teaching practice standards within the Faculty of Education.

The faculty successfully conducted a series of orientation and induction roundtable meetings for newly appointed Teaching Practice External Assessors from 20 to 23 July 2026. The programme was implemented across four strategic centres, namely Kokstad, Mthatha, East London, and Komani, to ensure that assessors were adequately prepared for their roles in supporting Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and School-Based Experience (SBE).

The orientation and induction programme brought together retired educationists, Faculty of Education facilitators led by Prof BD Bantwini and Prof PT Mpiti, who presented the WIL- SBE Faculty Overview from Policy to Implementation. Mrs NN Ndamase outlined the Programme Structure and qualifications offered. for external assessors to understand and strengthen collaboration to enhance the quality of teaching practice assessment. The sessions focused on familiarising assessors with the WSU Work-Integrated Learning Guidelines and the 2026 Implementation Plan. Ms NN Ngubane provided specifics on assessment plans and procedures and HR communication protocol. In addition, participants engaged in discussions on the implementation of School-Based Experience, giving a comprehensive analysis of WIL- SBE Tools led by Mr. M. Petse

The engagements were held on 20 July 2026 in Kokstad, 21 July 2026 in Mthatha, 22 July 2026 in East London, and 23 July 2026 in Komani. Across the four venues, a total of 82 Teaching Practice External Assessors participated in the orientation and induction programme. The departments also facilitated shared professional experiences and identified practical strategies to improve the effectiveness and consistency of teaching practice assessment on the 24th of July 2026.



ScienceDay

The MSTE department, in partnership with the Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu (ANSC) Science Centre and DBE, successfully hosted the 2026 Science and Technology Day at the Mthatha Campus on 22 July 2026 and the Komani Campus on 24 July 2026. The programme was designed to inspire a total of 500 secondary school learners to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), while showcasing the faculty's commitment to quality education, innovation, community engagement and sustainable development.

The event featured motivational presentations and keynote addresses highlighting opportunities in STEM education and careers. Learners participated in interactive science exhibitions, laboratory demonstrations, robotics and technology displays, mathematics activities and guided tours coordinated by ANSC and university staff. Schools rotated through various exhibition stations before participating in an interactive STEM quiz competition and the closing ceremony, where certificates and prizes were awarded.

Beyond promoting STEM education, the Science Day strengthened collaboration between the faculty, ANSC, local schools, the Department of Basic Education and community stakeholders. It also provided a strategic platform for showcasing the University's academic programmes, research capacity and commitment to developing future scientists, engineers, teachers and innovators. The initiative is expected to contribute to the University's long-term student recruitment strategy by increasing awareness of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu among prospective students. For the Faculty of Education, the programme

strengthens its role as a leader in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, enhances its visibility within the province and establishes sustainable partnerships that will support future outreach, teacher development, research collaboration and community engagement initiatives.



Academic Advisor Inspires Learners at Lower Seplan Career Day

As part of its commitment to community development, the Lower Seplan Development Structure hosted a Career Day at Lower Seplan Senior Secondary School on 29 July 2026. The initiative aimed to equip learners with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about their future education and career pathways. Ms R. Lekhehle, an Academic Advisor from the faculty, was invited as a guest speaker, and 88 learners attended the event.

Before addressing career choices and higher education opportunities, Ms Lekhehle introduced learners to the University's rebranding, ensuring they were familiar with the identity of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu and would not be confused when considering the institution for their studies. She then provided guidance on selecting appropriate careers and academic programmes, highlighting the importance of aligning subject choices, personal interests, and career aspirations with university admission requirements.

The session empowered learners with practical information to make informed decisions when choosing careers and applying to higher education institutions. By strengthening career awareness and promoting access to tertiary education, the initiative contributed to preparing learners for successful educational and professional futures while reinforcing the University's commitment to community engagement.



Faculty of Education Hosts Courageous Conversation on Disability, Identity and Inclusion



The faculty reaffirmed its commitment to fostering an inclusive and socially responsive academic environment by hosting a Courageous Conversations webinar on 23 July 2026. Held under the theme "Youth, Sexualities and Disabilities: Navigating Inclusion, Identity and Belonging in Higher Education," the event created an important platform for critical dialogue on equity, diversity, and the lived experiences of students with disabilities and diverse sexual identities within higher education.

The webinar formed part of the faculty's ongoing efforts to promote awareness, challenge stigma, and encourage meaningful conversations around inclusion. By bringing together academics, disability advocates, researchers, and members of the university community, the event highlighted the importance of creating institutional cultures where every student experiences dignity, belonging, and equal opportunities to succeed. The first keynote presentation, delivered by Mr B. Sibeko-Ngidi, Director of the Uthingo Network, challenged participants to reconsider traditional understandings of disability, sexuality, and inclusion through his presentation titled "Who Gets to Belong? Rethinking Disability, Sexuality and Inclusion in Higher Education." His presentation explored the barriers

that continue to marginalise many students and called for higher education institutions to adopt more inclusive policies, practices, and cultures that recognise the intersectionality of identity and ensure that all students experience genuine belonging.

The second keynote address was presented by Dr W. F. Tsabedze, a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Pretoria, whose presentation, "Ngisiboshwa: Navigating the Correctional and Re-Integration Process in South Africa," offered a thought-provoking perspective on the experiences of individuals navigating correctional systems and reintegration into society. His contribution encouraged participants to reflect on broader issues of social justice, rehabilitation, exclusion, and the role of higher education institutions in supporting vulnerable and historically marginalised communities.

A lively discussion session followed, providing participants with an opportunity to engage directly with the presenters through questions, reflections, and shared experiences. The interactive dialogue demonstrated the value of creating safe spaces where difficult but necessary conversations can take place, enabling participants to deepen their understanding of inclusion while exploring practical ways to promote accessibility, respect, and social cohesion across the university community.

Through initiatives such as Courageous Conversations, the faculty continues to demonstrate its leadership in advancing inclusive education, promoting critical engagement with contemporary social issues, and strengthening its commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, identity, or background, feel recognised, valued, and empowered to participate fully in university life.

Faculty Supports Career Aspirations at Mncwathi Senior Secondary School

On 23 July 2026, the Faculty of Education, through the Department of Business Management Education, participated in a Career Exhibition hosted at Mncwathi Senior Secondary School in Ward 15. The initiative was organised in collaboration with Ward 15 Graduates and Youth, the Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality, the South African Police Service (Ndengane), Walter Sisulu University, and Ingwe TVET College.

The exhibition aimed to inspire and empower learners, particularly those in Grades 8, 9, and 12, by exposing them to a wide range of career opportunities, academic pathways, and skills development options. Throughout the day, learners engaged with higher education institutions, professionals, and graduates, gaining valuable insights into subject selection, university admission requirements, and career prospects. The Walter Sisulu University Admission and Registration Unit provided practical guidance on application and registration processes, helping learners make informed decisions about their future studies.

A notable contributor to the success of the event was Mr S. Njeya from the Department of Business Management Education, who also hails from the Ward 15 community. As one of the key organisers, he was actively involved throughout the planning and implementation of the exhibition, serving as both a coordinator and an inspiring role model for learners. His commitment demonstrated the positive impact that graduates can have when giving back to their communities.

The exhibition also featured motivational messages from community leaders, including the Mayor of the Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality, Cllr T.D. Mafumbatha, who encouraged learners to work hard, believe in their abilities, and seize the educational opportunities available to them.

The event had a meaningful impact on participating learners, many of whom expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage directly with higher education institutions. One learner remarked that the exhibition had "opened my eyes to the higher education opportunities available to me." By bridging the gap between education and the world of work, the initiative addressed the need for quality career guidance in under-resourced communities while reinforcing the importance of partnerships between schools, universities, graduates, local government, and community organisations in shaping the aspirations and futures of young people.

Faculty Aligns Strategic Direction with iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's Vision 2040+



Following the approval of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's refocused Vision 2040+ Strategic Framework, the faculty convened a two-day Strategic Planning Retreat on 27-28 July 2026. The retreat brought together the Faculty Executive Management, Heads of Department and their deputies, and an academic leader to align the faculty's strategic direction with the University's renewed institutional vision and to chart a clear implementation pathway for the coming years.

The retreat provided an important platform for strategic reflection, collaboration, and forward planning. Guided by the University's renewed institutional priorities, participants explored how the faculty can strengthen its contribution to teaching and learning, research and innovation, community engagement, and institutional sustainability. Through robust discussions and collaborative planning, the faculty reaffirmed its commitment to producing socially responsive graduates, advancing impactful research, and addressing the educational needs of the communities it serves.

A significant outcome of the retreat was the collective development of a strategic roadmap that aligns the faculty's priorities with the University's Vision 2040+ aspirations. Participants reviewed the faculty's operating environment, identified opportunities for growth and innovation, and considered emerging trends that will shape teacher education over the coming years. This process enabled the faculty to refine its strategic focus, identify flagship initiatives, and establish measurable priorities that will guide implementation and performance monitoring in the years ahead.

The retreat also reinforced a culture of shared leadership and collective accountability. Departments worked collaboratively to ensure that their strategic priorities support the faculty's overall mission while contributing meaningfully to the University's signature themes and institutional objectives. The adoption of the retreat resolutions marks the beginning of a coordinated implementation process that will guide the faculty's planning, resource allocation, and decision-making as it advances towards 2040.

The Strategic Planning Retreat represents a significant milestone in positioning the Faculty of Education for future success. By aligning its strategic priorities with the University's Vision 2040+ Strategic Framework, the Faculty has laid a strong foundation for sustainable growth, academic excellence, transformative research, and greater societal impact. The retreat reaffirmed the faculty's commitment to remaining a leader in teacher education while preparing graduates who are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the transformation of education locally, nationally, and globally.

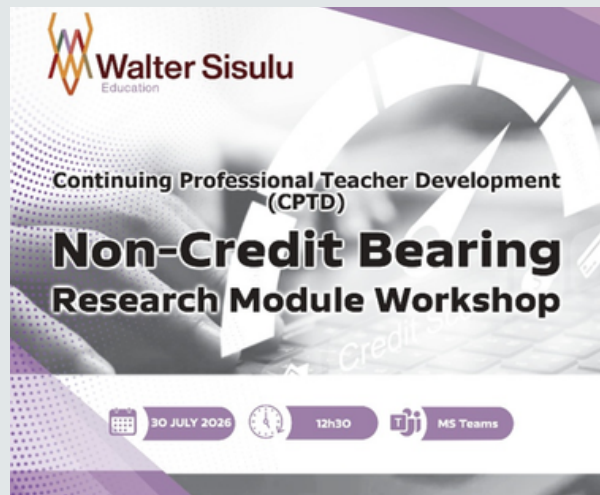
Non-Credit Bearing Research Module Workshop

The faculty, through the CPTD department, hosted a Non-Credit-Bearing Research Module Workshop on 30 July 2026 via Microsoft Teams. The workshop was part of the faculty's ongoing commitment to strengthening the research capacity of postgraduate students by providing practical guidance on contemporary research practices and postgraduate supervision (80 students and staff members attended).

The workshop was facilitated by Mr L Mdanyana, focusing on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic writing, highlighting the ethical and effective use of AI tools to support academic writing and research while maintaining academic integrity. The second session addressed the integration of AI in postgraduate supervision, providing insights into how AI technologies can support supervision, improve communication between supervisors and students, and enhance research productivity.

The final presentation was delivered by Dr N. Gqoli, who discussed the submission and defence of research proposals. The session guided participants through institutional expectations, proposal preparation, and best practices for successfully defending research proposals.

Overall, the workshop provided an important platform for postgraduate students and academic staff to strengthen their understanding of AI-assisted research practices and postgraduate research processes. The activity contributed to the faculty's strategic objective of enhancing postgraduate research quality, promoting ethical research practices, and supporting successful postgraduate student progression.



Faculty Strengthens Dialogue on Men and Masculinities in Early Childhood Education



The Faculty of Education strengthened its engagement in national scholarship on gender, masculinities and early childhood education when Dr Obakeng Kagola from the Department of Continuing Professional Teacher Development was invited by the South African Research Chair (SARChI) in Gender and Childhood Sexuality at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) to participate in the Men and Masculinities in Early Childhood Education conference held on 30 July 2026. The conference brought together scholars, practitioners and stakeholders to critically examine the gendered nature of early childhood education and the factors shaping men's participation in the sector. Dr Kagola presented his research, "eBuhlanti: A Space for Xhosa Male Foundation Phase Teachers' Pedagogical Mentoring," which draws on his work with pre-service male Foundation Phase teachers. The presentation explored eBuhlanti as an indigenous pedagogical and relational space where male student teachers negotiate identity, belonging, professional learning and mutual support. The findings highlighted how peer mentoring can strengthen pedagogical practices while creating opportunities for student teachers to engage critically with masculinity, culture, diversity and their emerging professional identities.

Dr Kagola also participated in the conference's Roundtable II: "Where to Next for Men in Early Childhood Education?", contributing to discussions with scholars and practitioners from across South Africa. His participation highlights the faculty's growing contribution to critical scholarship in teacher education, particularly around inclusion, masculinities and the experiences of teachers in the Foundation Phase. The collaboration with UKZN's SARChI Chair is particularly valuable in creating opportunities for continued scholarly exchange, collaborative research and postgraduate engagement. It provides a platform for the faculty's contextually grounded research to contribute to wider conversations about diversifying the early childhood education workforce and developing more inclusive and responsive teacher education practices.



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