The University of South Africa (UNISA)

Invites **Abstracts** for the

2021 Garmin Quality Community

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Date: 29 to 30 September 2021

All higher education institutions (HEIs) – national, continental, and global – have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent governmental regulations that followed to restrict the spread of the deadly virus. All Universities have had to resort to remote teaching, learning and assessment, which had implications for quality assurance and quality management. Moreover, the pandemic compelled all HEIs to pause, to reflect, and to rethink our notions of quality while being mindful of the student we cultivate in light of the post-pandemic society that is currently taking shape.

Proposals are invited from members of the Garmin Quality Community, quality practitioners, academics, researchers and interested parties in higher education to share their experiences and lessons learnt from the urgent remote working arrangements in 2020 and 2021, and the impact of the pandemic on institutional quality management and quality assurance.

I. Conference Theme:

"Managing and Rethinking Quality amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic"

II. Sub-themes:

The abstracts should address any, or a combination, of the following sub-themes/tracks:

Sub-theme 1:	Rethinking, Reclaiming and Repositioning Quality amidst and in response to the Pandemic

This sub-theme focuses on the various components (academic and support) comprising the institutional quality management system and how these worked in concert to safeguard the academic project during Covid-19. Proposals may consider the following: if, and how the (re)design and implementation of an integrated quality management system enhanced student success and improved the quality of the student learning experience; student involvement in the (re)design and implementation; what are the implications for quality conversations in the future that reflects a "new normal"?.

Sub-theme 2: Access, Equity and Inclusion in the face of uncertainty: "No student left behind"

The Pandemic has highlighted stark realities of inequality amongst and within institutions, society, communities, and individuals, in general. This sub-theme focuses on caring philosophies (Ubuntu), pedagogies and practices ensure that 'no student is left behind'. Moreover, this theme invites a rethink of Higher Education such that the ideal that 'no student should be left behind' speaks to epistemic justice as a measure of quality. As such, this theme Includes issues of access with success; universal design principles to include students and staff with disabilities; transformation in all its expense to bring about a much-desired cultural change in higher education.

Sub-theme 3: Teaching, Learning and Assessment during Covid-19: Towards a Reflexive Praxis

The urgent remote teaching and learning arrangements caused by Covid-19 has forced institutions to migrate from venue-based to online teaching and assessment. Some institutions embraced the change, others have not. Are academics and administrators satisfied with their experience of using online platforms? What is the impact of the migration on the student learning experience and student success? What good practices emerged, e.g. "smart" assessment and invigilation tools? By the same token, what new emphases have teaching and learning entailed in response to the need to be mindful of the student cultivated for a post-Covid society? What lessons from the pandemic inform and temper teaching and learning praxis? How is student success re-imagined in the context of a pandemic?

Sub-theme 4: Learning Analytics, Decision-making, Student Success

This sub-theme focuses on the Internal institutional data capabilities of HEIs and their relationship to effective decision-making to improve student success and safeguard the academic project amidst the pandemic.

III. Important dates

Wednesday 25 August 2021	**Submission deadline for abstracts**
Wednesday 01 September 2021	**Notification of outcome of proposal evaluation**
Wednesday 22 September 2021	**Submission deadline for electronic copy of presentation**
Wednesday 29 to Thursday 30 September 2021	**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

IV. Conference Structure

The structure of the conference will consist of four sessions as represented below.

- **Session one**: High-level presentations related to the Conference Theme
- **Session two**: Presentations from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- **Session three**: Panel discussion: Regulatory Bodies, Professional Bodies, External QA, and HEIs
- **Plenary and way forward**

V.   Participants

a   Keynote addresses

The keynote speakers will provide a high-level context of the Conference Theme. The first keynote address will be delivered by Prof Puleng LenkaBula, the Principal and Vice Chancellor of Unisa. The second keynote speaker will be an invited guest from the Open University of Tanzania. This session is approximately 2 hours long. Participants will be provided an opportunity for discussion and engagement with the presenters.

b   Presentations from HEIs

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) states in the *Framework for Institutional Audits* (CHE, 2021, p.11) that: "Whilst differentiation in the higher education sector, in the sense of HEIs having different missions, is valued, it should not justify a difference in the quality of provision provided". The Garmin Quality Community is comprised of 26 Public Universities, divided into three types, namely: traditional Universities, which offer theoretically-oriented university degrees; Universities of Technology (formerly "Technikons"), which offer vocational oriented diplomas and degrees; and comprehensive Universities, which offer a combination of both types of qualification. Recognising the different types of HEIs, the conference invites presentations from all 26 Public Universities, as well as Private Universities. Two 2,5 hour sessions of parallel sessions of 20-minute presentations on the sub-themes of the conference, will allow for approximately 24 presentations. Participants will be provided an opportunity for discussion and engagement with the presenter(s).

c   Panel discussion: Building bridges - New quality agendas for external and internal quality assurance

As we collectively ***forge ahead*** to achieve our national, continent and global goals, members from Regulatory Bodies, External QA, Professional Bodies, QA Associations and Higher Education Institutions will share ideas on innovative approaches "to build bridges and to construct a framework for integrated support and collaboration". This session is approximately one hour.

d   Plenary and conclusion of the conference

In a joint plenary, the conference concludes with an overview of the discussions that would have taken place over the two days and will provide a way forward. This session is approximately one hour long.

VI.   Abstract submissions

Abstracts should be submitted in the following formats:

- MS Word documents only
- Not exceeding 350 words in length, but providing enough detail to evaluate the proposal
- Reflect titles, names of authors and their institutional or organizational affiliations;
- List the five (5) key words;
- Indicate chosen subtheme/s;
- Font: Times New Roman or Arial; Font size: 11; Spacing: 1.5 line spacing; Text lines justified
- Margins: 2.5 cm left margin and 2 cm top, bottom and right margins;

- Illustrations, graphs, or references may be included if these will assist with the evaluation process.
- Referencing technique: Harvard method or APA style only.

Submission should be by email to the following email address: ejohanne@unisa.ac.za

VII. Abstract evaluation process

The evaluation of abstracts is an important activity to ensure the quality of submissions. The host University is committed to coordinating the evaluation process in a fair, objective, and rigorous manner whilst also considering issues such as the representation of all types of higher education institutions across Southern Africa. In facilitating this, the following should be noted:

- A review panel will be constituted to assess abstracts against a predetermined list of quality criteria (see below).
- Where proposals are rated at roughly the same level of quality, the evaluation committee will consider the type of institution to ensure reasonable diversity without neglecting the quality requirements of the peer review panel.

General criteria applicable to all abstracts:

1. The overall clarity of the abstract (e.g., quality of writing, organisation of ideas, clarity of assumptions, the logic of arguments).
2. The importance, significance, and relevance of the topic and major issue(s) addressed.
3. The potential significance of the contribution.

The organising committee is still busy communicating with various accredited journals to consider submitted articles to be given priority for consideration for publishing. There is a possibility that one of the journals will assist with a special edition for this conference. Submissions will then be required to meet the specifications of the journal. In addition, the organising committee will also consider the production of book chapters. Guidelines will be provided for the approved presentations/abstracts after the conference.

Please submit your proposal by
Wednesday, 25th of August 2021