



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Announcement Research Colloquium

Theme: Shifting Participation Trends in
South African Higher Education: Public
and Private higher education Sector



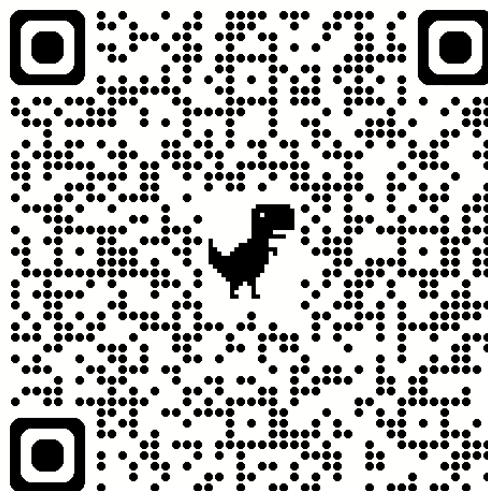
24 June 2026



Time: 09:00 - 13:00



Online



Scan here to register

Background:

The VitalStats 2023 data indicate clear changes in South African higher education enrolment between 2018 and 2023. In particular, the publication documents a pronounced increase in enrolment for one demographic cohort alongside declines among other cohorts, a contraction in the Education Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) category, and modest rises across other CESM categories such as the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET). These patterns prompt questions about which student profiles and programmes are expanding or contracting and why. Such shifts are plausibly driven by broader structural factors, including labour-market demand and evolving skills requirements, secondary-school outcomes, affordability and funding constraints, institutional strategies, and changes in delivery modality (in-person versus online).

Aim and Objectives of the Colloquium

The aim of the colloquium is to facilitate an engagement among various stakeholders within higher education including researchers, institutional leaders, policy-makers, students, and employers to explore and contextualise contemporary participation trends at public and private higher education institutions.

The objectives of the research colloquium are to:

1. Provide a platform for participants to interrogate the notable shifts in enrolment patterns in the higher education sector.
2. Analyse changes in enrolments across Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) disciplines, with particular attention to shifts in subject mix and student demand during the current era of technological transformation.
3. Highlight successes of the current participation trends in the higher education sector.
4. Promote interdisciplinary dialogue on policy interventions, and best practices to enhance equitable access, and student success.

People expected to attend the colloquium

Anyone with an interest in higher education is welcome to attend and take part in the colloquium. Attendance and participation in the colloquium is encouraged especially for those who fit into the following categories:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellors for research, senior academics and administrative employees at higher education institutions.
 - Researchers and academics with an interest in student participation patterns and trends, including the factors influencing these dynamics, as well as those focusing on student enrolments in higher education.
 - Officials from the Department of Higher Education and Training;
 - Policy makers and policy analysts
 - Student representatives;
 - Officials from higher education stakeholder bodies.
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The format of the research colloquium

The research colloquium will revolve around four presentations to be delivered by the following experts:



Prof Denyse Webbstock

Prof Webbstock is the Senior Director: Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring at the University of Johannesburg. Her responsibilities include the University's Strategic and Performance Plans; enrolment planning; institutional research including student experience surveys; the University's submissions to international rankings agencies; data governance and high-level data analysis for executive-level decision-making. Her research interests include leadership in higher education, institutional autonomy and the South African higher education system in general.

She was previously Director of Monitoring and Evaluation at the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) where she was responsible for the CHE's higher education research publications.



Mr Amos Mufamadi

Mr Mufamadi is the Data and Information Manager in the Research and Monitoring programme at the Council on Higher Education (CHE). He leads the production of end-user data and information products, including the annual VitalStats publication and the other regular data and information bulletins posted on the CHE website. He translates structured and unstructured datasets into accessible outputs, descriptive statistics, graphs, visual models, analytic narratives and other innovative formats, to support research and monitoring activities.

Previously, Mr Mufamadi managed the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and later the National Learner's Record Database (NLRD) at the South African Qualifications Authority before transitioning to the CHE.



Dr Mandi Joubert

Dr Mandi Joubert is responsible for overseeing academic quality, faculty development, and programme innovation. With a passion for student success and academic rigour, she plays a key role in shaping learning experiences that are both relevant and future-focused.

Dr Joubert leads national academic teams and works closely with regulatory bodies to ensure Eduvos programmes maintain the highest standards.



Mr Mahlubi Mabizela

Mahlubi Chief Mabizela is the Director of Operations and Sector Support at Universities South Africa (USAf). He has over three decades of experience in higher education policy, research, and governance. For 16 years he served as Director and later a Chief Director for University Education Policy and Research Support in the Department of Higher Education and Training, where he led the development of key national policies including the Research Outputs Policy, Creative Outputs Policy, Internationalisation Framework, Language Policy for Higher Education, and the Regulations for Private Institutions. His portfolio also covered university governance, student leadership development, accreditation of journals, transformation initiatives, and national campaigns such as Apply Now! and the graduate community service programme.

Before joining government, Mabizela was a Research Specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council. He began his career at the University of the Western Cape, where he completed M.Ed. with pioneering research on public-private higher education patterns in South Africa.



Mr Michael Gordon

Mr Gordon served for more than a decade in the Higher Education Monitoring and Evaluation unit as an Information Specialist at the Council on Higher Education (CHE). He is presently employed within the Strategic Management Support Directorate at Tshwane University of Technology, where he is engaged in strategic institutional planning and the development and implementation of student enrolment and efficiency initiatives. His research and professional interests focus on the methodological and organisational processes that underpin data-driven decision-making in higher education.

Registration

Individuals interested in attending the research colloquium should complete the registration form which can be accessed by clicking [here](#). Participation in the research colloquium is free, and thus participants would not be required to pay the registration fee. The last day for accepting registrations will be 19 June 2026.

Programme of the colloquium

The programme for the colloquium will be shared with all registered participants Shortly before the date of the colloquium.

Enquiries

Enquiries about this event should be directed to:

Lumka Mayepu, mobile phone number: 083 319 9170, Email : Mayepu.L@che.ac.za

Amos Mufamadi, mobile phone number: 083 333 0231 , Email: Mufamadi.A@che.ac.za