

Enhancing the Quality of Learning & Teaching through Student Evaluations

📅 October 8-9, 2025

📍 Johannesburg, South Africa



JOHANNESBURG



12:00

12:00 to 13:00
Welcome Networking Lunch

13:00

13:00 to 13:15
Words of Welcome
Harshila Dulabh, University of Witwatersrand

13:15

13:15 to 13:45
Innovating Together: Institutional Strategies for Students and Academics in Teaching Quality Enhancement
Nompumelelo Mazibuko University of Witwatersrand

This presentation explores how institutions can drive teaching quality enhancement through collaborative innovation between students and academics. Grounded in the principle that sustainable improvements in learning and teaching require active participation from all stakeholders, the session highlights a range of institutional strategies that foster reflective practice, constructive feedback, and shared ownership of quality assurance processes. Drawing on practical initiatives implemented to engage students as partners and support academics in pedagogical development, the discussion illustrates how evaluation tools, feedback campaigns, and capacity-building interventions can create meaningful dialogue and actionable insights. By showcasing both challenges and successes, the presentation provides a roadmap for cultivating a culture of continuous improvement in higher education, where innovation is co-created and teaching excellence is advanced collectively.

13:45

13:45 to 14:25
Data Can Do More Than Inform: Imperatives for Data That Could Lead to Change in Teaching and Learning
Dr Rejoice Nsibande, University of Pretoria

Student feedback on teaching and course experiences is often collected and presented as evidence in institutional processes, yet it rarely drives meaningful change in teaching and learning. In many institutions, the use of student voice remains limited to informing decision-making processes, with insufficient emphasis on enhancing teaching practice and, ultimately, student success. In the South African higher education context, leveraging student feedback as a driver for targeted, equitable, and transformative action is imperative. Rather than prioritising its role in decisions about career progression, we must explore how feedback can serve as a catalyst for pedagogical creativity and lasting change. This requires a shift from focusing only on ‘use’ to ‘usability’ of data—support a move beyond reporting to action that is purposeful, actionable, and contextually relevant. A critical question becomes: How can universities leverage the affordances of their student feedback systems to ensure that the quality of the data supports action and consequently drive sustained improvements in student outcomes?

14:25

14:25 to 14:40
Lightning Talk: University of Fort Hare's Journey with Explorance Blue
Patricia Muhuro, University of Fort Hare

In this lightning session, the University of Fort Hare will share its experience in adopting Explorance Blue, including why it chose the platform, how it has already supported its feedback processes, and its plans for expanding its use in the future. This snapshot offers practical insights into how Blue continues to add value as Fort Hare strengthens and evolves its feedback practices.

14:40

14:40 to 15:00
Networking Break

15:00

15:00 to 15:45
Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Qualitative Analysis and Decision-Making in Higher Education
Dr Celine Meyers, University of Witwatersrand & Chris Slack, Explorance

The integration of artificial intelligence into qualitative research represents a major methodological shift, particularly in the higher education context where large volumes of open-ended data are frequently collected. Recent developments in natural language processing and machine learning provides productive opportunities for researchers to analyse qualitative data at scale, with applications ranging from thematic extraction to sentiment analysis. These tools offer clear benefits in terms of efficiency, pattern recognition and the ability to process large datasets that would otherwise be constrained by the limits of manual analysis. This presentation critically examines the use of AI in qualitative research, focusing on both its analytical capabilities as well as limitations, particularly in areas where human judgement and interpretive expertise remain essential. Drawing on example data, it illustrates how AI can support institutional decision-making by identifying dominant themes, emerging concerns and trends across large respondent groups. The discussion also engages with key ethical considerations, including issues of interpretive validity, contextual nuance and data governance, and considers how these factors shape the responsible and effective use of AI for decision-making in higher education.

This session will introduce Explorance MLY, an award-winning, AI-powered solution designed to extract actionable insights from qualitative feedback. Through a live demonstration, attendees will explore MLY’s key features, including sentiment analysis, crowdsourced recommendations, and alerts on sensitive matters from qualitative feedback. Built with specialised machine learning models for Higher Education, Human Resources, and Learning & Development, MLY empowers institutions and organisations to better understand and respond to feedback effectively.

15:45

15:45 to 16:15
Reimagining Feedback in Higher Education: Introducing Explorance BlueX
Chris Slack, Explorance

The Survey Software That's Built for Everyone

An exclusive look at BlueX a new survey platform redefining how higher education collects and acts on insights. Built to go beyond traditional form builders, BlueX enables academic teams to create expressive, intuitive, and actionable surveys with ease. From research projects to administrative surveys, BlueX delivers unmatched customization, seamless collaboration, and advanced analytics—so every voice can be heard and every decision can be data-informed.

In this session, you'll learn how BlueX enables institutions to:

- Empower campus-wide surveying across schools, faculties, and people while maintaining oversight through role-based sharing and approval workflows
- Deliver survey analytics and insightful reports within the same platform
- Adapt on the fly with live survey versioning, templates, and real-time respondent tracking
- Do more than surveys, including forms, newsletters, non-graded quizzes, and interactive content with a single intuitive survey editor

16:15

16:15 to 17:15
Panel Discussion: Harnessing AI and Automation for Smarter Stakeholder Feedback and Institutional Decision-Making
Moderator: Samer Jaffar, Explorance

Panelist:

- Dr Lile Lerato Lkena, Mangosuthu University of Technology
- Thakatau Hlakotsa, University of Witwatersrand
- Antoinette Van der Merwe, Stellenbosch University

This session will explore how AI-driven analytics, automation, and system integration are transforming the way higher education institutions manage and act on student feedback. We'll discuss the evolution from traditional data handling to intelligent ecosystems that enable real-time insights, predictive modelling, and qualitative data analysis at scale.

Industry experts and institutional leaders will share strategies on:

- Leveraging AI for deeper insights from qualitative feedback
- Integrating systems and data flows for seamless information sharing
- Using automation to close the feedback loop efficiently
- Overcoming technical and cultural challenges in building a scalable, AI-powered feedback ecosystem

Participants will leave with practical approaches to building a robust, data-driven environment that enhances engagement, strengthens decision-making, and supports continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

17:15

17:15 to 17:30
Day 1 Closing Remarks
Samer Jaffar, Explorance

17:30

17:30 to 20:00
Social Networking Reception
The Barn Restaurant

Enjoy an evening of networking and conversation over fine food and drinks at the Barn Restaurant, complete with a special surprise performance to make the night unforgettable.

20:00

8:45

8:45 to 9:15

Welcome Refreshments

9:15

9:15 to 10:00

Boosting Course Evaluation Response Rates

Chris Slack, Explorance

Discover practical strategies and powerful features within Explorance Blue designed to help drive response rates. Join this session to learn tips and best practices for engaging respondents and streamlining survey experiences to maximise student participation.

10:00

10:00 to 11:00

Expanding Feedback Innovation: UCT's Journey with Explorance Blue and MLY

Stephen Marquard, Zaaid Orrie, Chevon Erispe, University of Cape Town

Chris Slack, Explorance

Since 2023, the University of Cape Town has seen significant growth in the adoption of Explorance Blue, strengthening its institutional approach to course evaluations and feedback-driven improvement. This session will highlight UCT's progress to date while also addressing current gaps and opportunities for further enhancing the impact of Blue across teaching and learning.

Looking ahead, UCT will share its plans for leveraging Explorance MLY to support the SASSE 2025 national survey, as well as the upcoming integration of MLY with Blue to deepen qualitative data insights in the Second Semester of 2025. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how one of South Africa's leading institutions is advancing a culture of evidence-based decision-making and student engagement through innovative use of feedback analytics.

This session will also showcase Explorance Blue, our flagship Feedback Analytics platform, designed to support a wide range of feedback initiatives. Attendees will gain an overview of its key features and see a live demonstration of how the platform streamlines the collection, analysis, and action on feedback. Trusted by institutions worldwide, Explorance Blue enables seamless management of course evaluations, institutional surveys, and other assessments—all within a comprehensive, data-driven system.

11:00

11:00 to 11:20

Networking Break

11:20

11:20 to 12:00

International Speaker: Bath Spa University's Journey to a Stronger Student Voice

Rachel Garman, Bath Spa University

12:00

12:00 to 12:45

Event Closing and Q&A with the Explorance Team

12:45

12:45 to 14:00

Networking Lunch

14:00