

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR VOL. 1:1 OF THE
SAQAN JOURNAL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS CALL MAY BE ADDRESSED TO:
ZAWADA.B@CHE.AC.ZA

SAQAN

SOUTHERN AFRICAN
QUALITY ASSURANCE
NETWORK





1. THE SOUTHERN AFRICA QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK (SAQAN)

SAQAN (the Southern African Quality Assurance Network) is a non-profit, voluntary, member-based organisation of national higher education quality assurance bodies and higher education institutions from Southern Africa. The main aims of SAQAN are to promote quality in higher education, foster harmonisation of quality assurance systems in the region and beyond to enable mobility and recognition, and to facilitate international recognition of higher education qualifications from Southern Africa to enhance mobility of staff and students.

The key functions of SAQAN are to promote the creation of effective and efficient quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms in higher education within Southern Africa; support the development of quality assurance through capacity building, seminars, workshops and conferences; disseminate information through newsletters, journals, books and other documents, in print and electronic forms; participate and collaborate in continental and international training and research programmes within Southern Africa; mobilise resources to sustain the Network's projects and programmes; and develop and maintain a database of quality assurance bodies and experts. Member countries are Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi.

2. THE *SAQAN JOURNAL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

The main objective of the *SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* is to establish quality assurance in higher education as both an academic and a professional practice in the Southern African region, on the African continent and beyond. The idea, in line with the SAQAN conferences, is to bring together quality assurance practitioners and researchers in the SADC region and beyond, to share experiences, good practices and approaches towards promoting the culture of quality assurance in higher education. The Journal is also intended to serve as a platform for theorizing conceptions of quality and quality assurance in higher education,





exchanging research findings and professional expertise pertaining to quality assurance, quality promotion and quality development in higher education.

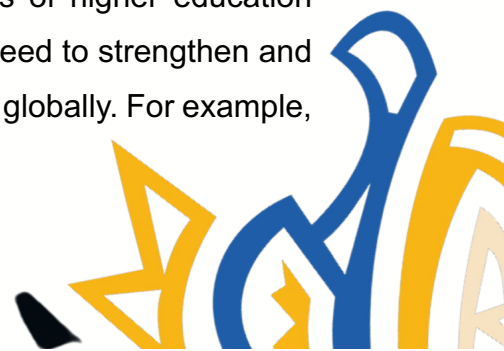
The intention of the Journal is to create a space for quality assurance as a discipline and field of scholarly and professional activity, recognising that journals play a significant role in establishing disciplines' credibility and have done so for centuries.

Recognizing that quality assurance practitioners may not necessarily be trained in research, the journal will create space for quality assurance practitioners to start their writing journey with professional notes and reviews, rather than full-length papers. Research and writing support will also be provided to new authors.

The launch and first developmental stages of the Journal will be supported by a collaborative agreement between SAQAN, the University of Johannesburg and the Council on Higher Education in South Africa.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS

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 provision, such as open and distance learning, and blended and online learning, and an increase in cross-border education, which has led to questions on how quality can best be maintained, and how quality assurance can assist in these contexts. 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 2015. 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 growth in numbers of higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies has called for the need to strengthen and harmonise quality assurance systems nationally, regionally and globally. For example,



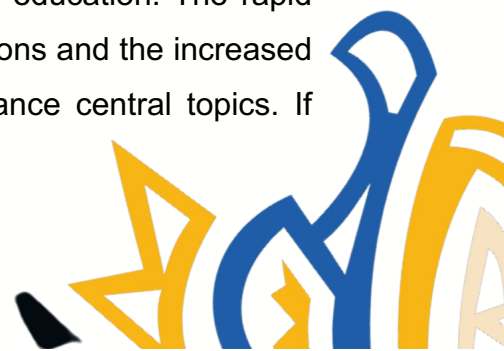


the ASG-QA (2019) maintains that harmonised QA systems in HE are imperative for Africa to realise the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. The African Union (AU) has, at the highest level, called for the harmonisation and strengthening of the quality of higher education in Africa 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-QA (2019) further notes that diverse HE systems on the continent have resulted in challenges regarding the mutual recognition of university qualifications, constraining academic integration and the mobility of students across the African continent. The recognition of degrees aligns with the *Addis Ababa Convention (2015)* on the recognition of qualifications on the continent. The Convention establishes a legal framework for a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory assessment and recognition of qualifications in Africa to facilitate cooperation and inter-institutional 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 the 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 Ababa 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 made quality and quality assurance central topics. If





Africa's investment in the education of its youth is to reap demographic and transformative dividends, quality and quality assurance in higher education and training are essential.

The rise and ubiquitous nature of technology in higher education is also a current phenomenon which impacts the quality assurance of higher education. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions have chosen to maximise the technological investments that were made during the pandemic and are choosing to continue with blended and online modes of provision, rather than returning to pre-pandemic contact modes of learning and teaching. The startling rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also impacted higher education in all aspects of its operation, most notably in learning, teaching and assessment, research as well as the operations of the institutions.

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. It promotes a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and accountability, leading to quality higher education and better student outcomes.

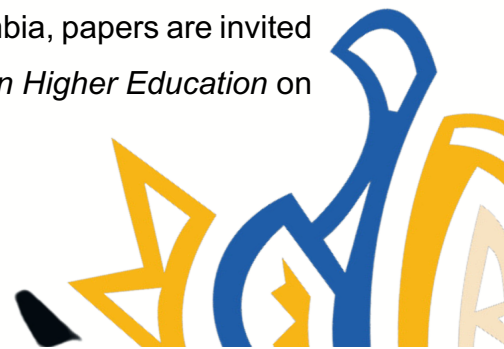
4. THE THEME FOR THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE SAQAN JOURNAL IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The theme for Volume 1, Number 1, of the *SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* is aligned with the conference theme of the 6th SAQAN Conference to be held in Zambia where the *SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* will be launched in September 2024.

The theme of the 6th SAQAN Conference is:

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

In line with the sub-themes of the 6th SAQAN Conference in Zambia, papers are invited for the first issue of the *SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* on the following topics:





TOPICS
1. External quality assurance of blended and online programmes and qualifications, especially in fields where most of the work is of a practical nature.
2. Internal quality assurance of blended and online programmes and qualifications, especially in fields where most of the work is of a practical nature.
3. The impact of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, and others, on quality assurance in higher education, both positive and negative.
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. Data analytics, such as graduate tracer studies and their role in quality assurance in higher education.
8. Contextualising Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

5. INVITATION TO SUBMIT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE *SAQAN JOURNAL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

The following types of contributions are invited:

- a) Full-length conceptual papers
- b) Full-length empirical research papers
- c) Professional notes
- d) Reviews.





A) FULL-LENGTH CONCEPTUAL PAPERS:

Full-length conceptual papers may explore any concept or set of concepts related to quality or quality assurance in higher education from a theoretical or philosophical position and in line with the themes and sub-themes described above. Submitted papers should be embedded in an appropriate literature review and should embrace a fresh approach to theorizing or practice, contributing to a relevant critical discourse of quality and quality assurance, and higher education. Papers should be no more than 8000 words, including the references, and should include 5 keywords and an abstract of no more than 250 words in English, French and Portuguese.

B) FULL-LENGTH EMPIRICAL RESEARCH PAPERS:

Full-length empirical research papers should be based on a quantitative or qualitative study of a set of data (which may include an in-depth case study), attempting to answer a set of research questions through the posing of hypotheses, supported by a theoretical framework and a specific research design. Papers should be no more than 8000 words, including the references, and should include 5 keywords and an abstract of no more than 250 words in English, French and Portuguese.

C) PROFESSIONAL NOTES:

Professional notes create an opportunity for quality assurance practitioners to report on their work, for example through a smaller case study or by describing a good practice, in a narrative form, without the need for a theoretical framework, literature review or research design. Professional notes should be no more than 2000 words, including the references.

D) REVIEWS:

Reviews of any seminal book, paper, conference, web-based or other resources, that prospective authors consider important or significant for the





SAQAN community may be submitted. Reviews should be no more than 2000 words, including the references.

The language of the contributions should be English, and the contributions should be professionally edited before they are submitted to the *SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*. Abstracts should be in English, French and Portuguese.

Submissions should be in MS Word. The text is single-spaced; uses a 12-point font; employs italics, rather than underlining (except with URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures, and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end. Please view the **Author Guidelines** at <https://ujonlinepress.uj.ac.za/index.php/ujp/about/submissions> for more details on the technical requirements for the submission, specifically as relates to referencing and formatting.

All submissions should have been screened for plagiarism and copyright infringement. Please include the Turnitin or iThenticate report with your submission. See our plagiarism policy for details: <https://ujonlinepress.uj.ac.za/index.php/ujp/plagiarism>.

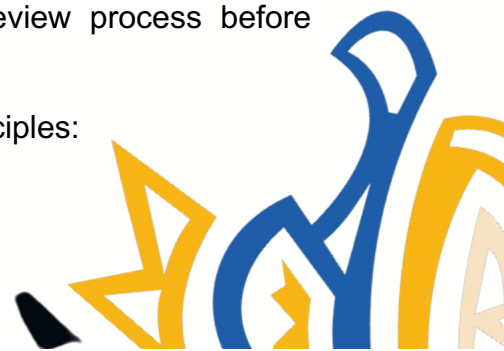
An ethical clearance certificate from your institution should accompany your submission if your research involves access to records of personal or confidential information.

Submissions can be made online by registering a profile at [the SAQAN Journal for Quality Assurance in Higher Education](https://ujonlinepress.uj.ac.za/index.php/ujp/plagiarism).

6. PEER REVIEW OF THE *SAQAN JOURNAL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

All submissions will be subjected to a double-blind peer-review process before publication.

The review process takes place according to the following principles:





- Pre-publication peer review.
- Double-blind peer review.
- The Editor mediates all interactions between reviewers and authors.
- Peer reviews are not published.
- Reviews are owned by the authors of the reviews.

In evaluating the manuscript, reviewers focus on the following aspects:

- Originality
- Contribution to the field
- Technical quality
- Clarity of presentation
- Depth of research.

