

## **CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies (Teaching and Learning) (NQF Level 8)**



### **Background and history**

The CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies (Teaching and Learning) is a collaborative professional development initiative between the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) and the African Doctoral Academy (ADA) at Stellenbosch University. It was established to strengthen teaching excellence, scholarly practice and educational leadership across the South African higher education sector by providing advanced professional learning opportunities for academics, academic developers and higher education professionals.

Cape Higher Education Consortium (RF)  
NPC Reg. No. 2003/003131/08

Registered Non-Profit Organisation – 028 374 NPO  
VAT Reg No 4560215875. Approved Public Benefit Organisation,  
Reg. No. 930002124

Members: University of Cape Town,  
Stellenbosch University, University of the Western Cape,  
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

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(Chair), R Balkaran, TE Cloete (CEO)

CHEC, comprising the University of Cape Town (UCT), Stellenbosch University (SU), the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), has a long history of inter-institutional collaboration in academic development, quality enhancement and staff capacity building. The partnership with the African Doctoral Academy has enabled the development of a rigorous programme that combines disciplinary expertise from across the four universities with international scholarship in higher education teaching and learning.

The programme responds to the rapidly changing higher education landscape, characterised by increasing student diversity, curriculum transformation, digital learning, artificial intelligence, authentic assessment and growing expectations for academics to demonstrate scholarly approaches to teaching. Rather than focusing solely on classroom techniques, the programme encourages participants to become reflective practitioners capable of investigating, evaluating and improving their own educational practice.

The unique 2026 offering was presented as a pilot project intensive Winter School comprising five integrated modules delivered by leading scholars from the CHEC institutions. The programme culminated in a Capstone Project in which participants demonstrated how programme learning could be applied to address an authentic challenge within their own higher education context.

## **Programme purpose**

The purpose of the CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies is to develop higher education practitioners who can:

- critically examine contemporary issues in higher education;
- design student-centred learning environments;
- develop authentic and inclusive assessment practices;
- undertake scholarly inquiry into teaching and learning;
- integrate educational technologies and artificial intelligence responsibly;
- promote citizenship, social justice and inclusion in higher education; and
- contribute to institutional and sector-wide transformation through evidence-informed educational practice.

The programme emphasises the integration of theory and practice, enabling participants to move beyond disciplinary expertise towards becoming scholarly educators capable of leading educational innovation.

## **NQF Level**

The programme is pitched at NQF Level 8, reflecting postgraduate-level learning appropriate for academics, academic developers and higher education professionals who already possess an undergraduate qualification and are responsible for curriculum design, teaching, assessment and educational leadership.

Learning at this level requires participants to:

- critically engage with higher education theory;
- synthesise diverse educational perspectives;
- apply advanced knowledge to complex educational challenges;
- evaluate and improve professional practice using evidence; and
- demonstrate independent judgement and scholarly reflection.

The programme therefore aligns with the descriptors of NQF Level 8, which emphasise specialised knowledge, critical analysis, problem-solving and the application of theory within complex professional contexts.

## Programme structure

The programme consists of five interconnected postgraduate modules, each addressing a major dimension of higher education teaching and learning. The modules were presented online with a hybrid Capstone event. In the July 2026 programme these included:

| Module                                              | Focus                                                                                                                                 |              |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| PG11 – Citizenship, Social Inclusion and Difference | Social justice, decolonisation, diversity, inclusion and belonging in higher education.                                               | 6 July 2026  |
| PG02 – Assessment in Higher Education               | Authentic assessment, constructive alignment, assessment for learning, feedback and evaluating learning in the age of AI.             | 7 July 2026  |
| PG03 – Research for Enhancing Teaching and Learning | Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), practitioner inquiry, educational research methodologies and evidence-informed practice. | 8 July 2026  |
| PG10 – ICTs: Teaching and Learning                  | Digital pedagogy, online learning, AI, emerging technologies and technology-enhanced learning.                                        | 9 July 2026  |
| PG01 – Teaching and Learning in Higher Education    | Learning theories, curriculum design, student-centred learning, reflective practice and educational innovation.                       | 10 July 2026 |
| <b>Capstone event</b>                               |                                                                                                                                       | 17 July 2026 |

Each module combines conceptual engagement with practical application through case studies, collaborative activities, critical discussion and reflective learning.

## Educational philosophy

The programme is underpinned by several complementary educational principles:

- Student-centered learning, recognising learners as active constructors of knowledge.
- Reflective professional practice, encouraging participants to critically evaluate and continuously improve their own teaching.
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), promoting evidence-informed educational decision-making.
- Authentic learning and assessment, connecting higher education practice with professional and societal contexts.

- Social justice and inclusion, ensuring equitable participation and epistemic access for diverse learners.
- Technology-enhanced learning, incorporating digital innovation and responsible use of artificial intelligence.
- Communities of practice, enabling participants to learn collaboratively across institutions and disciplines.

These principles collectively support the development of scholarly educators capable of responding to the changing demands of higher education.

## **CHEC's co-creation model and learning approach**

CHEC's co-creation model positions participants as active partners in the learning process, fostering collaboration between facilitators and participants to jointly design, share, reflect on and apply knowledge through authentic, practice-based learning experiences. The programme adopts an experiential and inquiry-based approach in which participants engage in:

- critical reading of contemporary higher education literature;
- collaborative discussion and peer learning;
- reflective writing;
- application of theory to authentic higher education challenges;
- curriculum and assessment design activities;
- exploration of educational technologies and AI;
- development of an individual Portfolio of Evidence; and
- presentation of a Capstone Project demonstrating applied learning.

Rather than simply transmitting knowledge, the programme encourages participants to interrogate assumptions, investigate their own practice and develop sustainable improvements within their institutional contexts.

*"This was one of the most valuable professional development programmes I have attended."*

*"Every session challenged me to rethink my teaching and gave me practical ideas that I can implement immediately."*

*"The facilitators created an environment where everyone felt comfortable contributing and learning from one another."*

*"The balance between theory and practical application was outstanding."*

*"I leave inspired, more confident, and excited to transform my own teaching practice."*

*"The passion and expertise of every facilitator were evident throughout the programme."*

## Capstone project<sup>1</sup>

The programme culminates in a Capstone Project entitled "*From Insight to Intervention: Applying Learning in Higher Education Practice*." Participants are required to identify a significant teaching, learning or curriculum challenge within their own context and develop an evidence-informed intervention grounded in the theories and approaches encountered throughout the programme. The capstone comprises both a Portfolio of Evidence and an oral presentation, demonstrating the participant's ability to integrate theory, reflection, inquiry and practical application.

## Graduate attributes

On successful completion of the programme, participants are expected to demonstrate the ability to:

- critically analyse higher education teaching and learning challenges;
- design inclusive and authentic learning experiences;
- develop evidence-based assessment strategies;
- integrate digital technologies and AI responsibly into learning;
- conduct scholarly inquiry into teaching practice;
- promote socially just and decolonised educational environments;
- apply reflective practice to continuous professional development; and
- lead educational innovation within their institutions.

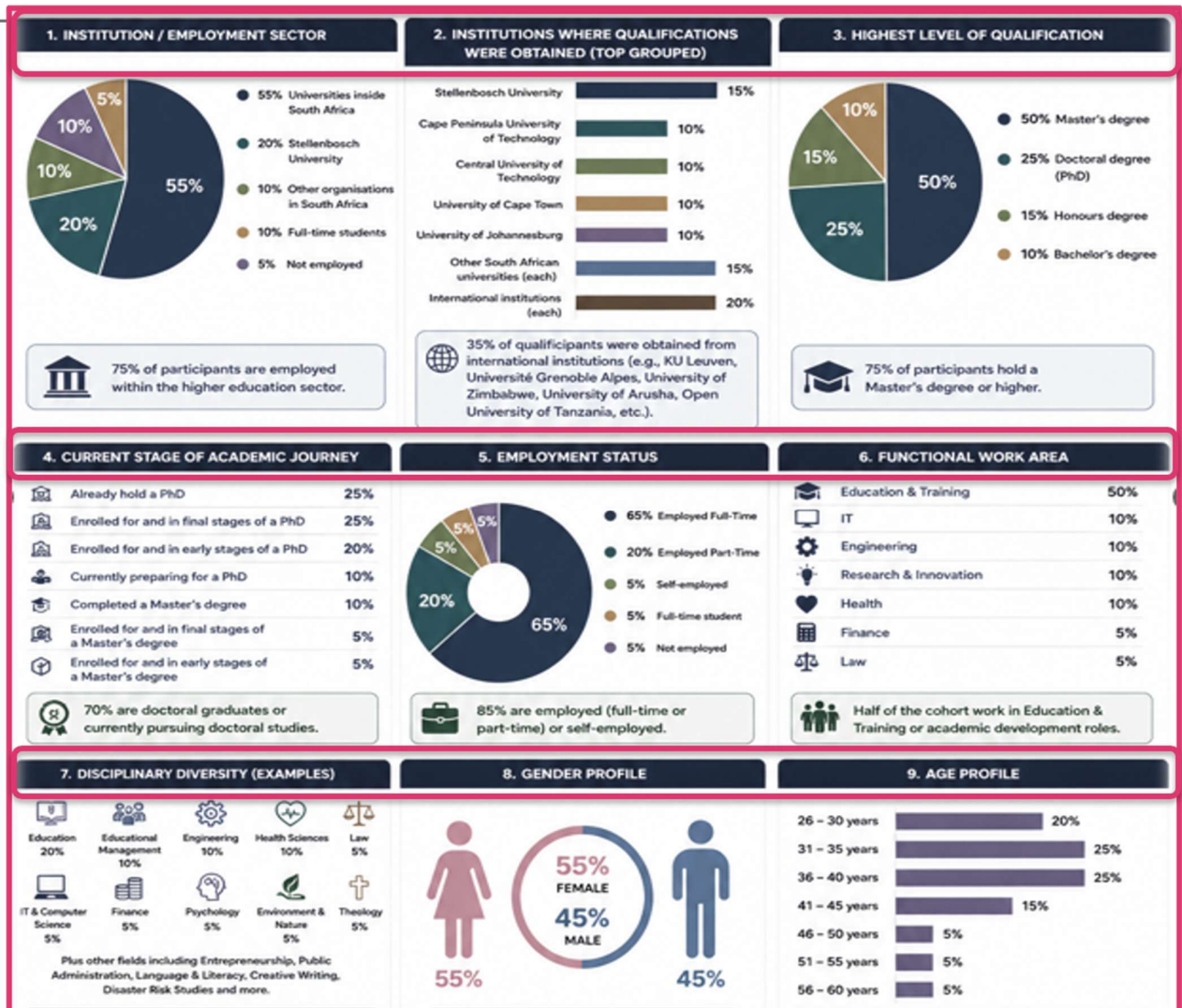
## Participant profile

The profile provides a useful picture of the cohort participating in the programme. It suggests that the programme attracted a highly qualified, professionally experienced and academically diverse group of participants, with most already working in higher education. The cohort consists primarily of higher education professionals who are already well established in their careers. Most participants are employed at South African universities and possess postgraduate qualifications, indicating that the programme is attracting experienced practitioners rather than novice educators.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annexures





Participants are predominantly higher education professionals. 75% are employed within the higher education sector (55% at South African universities and 20% at Stellenbosch University). Only 5% are unemployed, while 10% are full-time students. The cohort provided a mix across South African HEIs public and private across multiple disciplines allowing for diversity in the co-creation framework adopted.

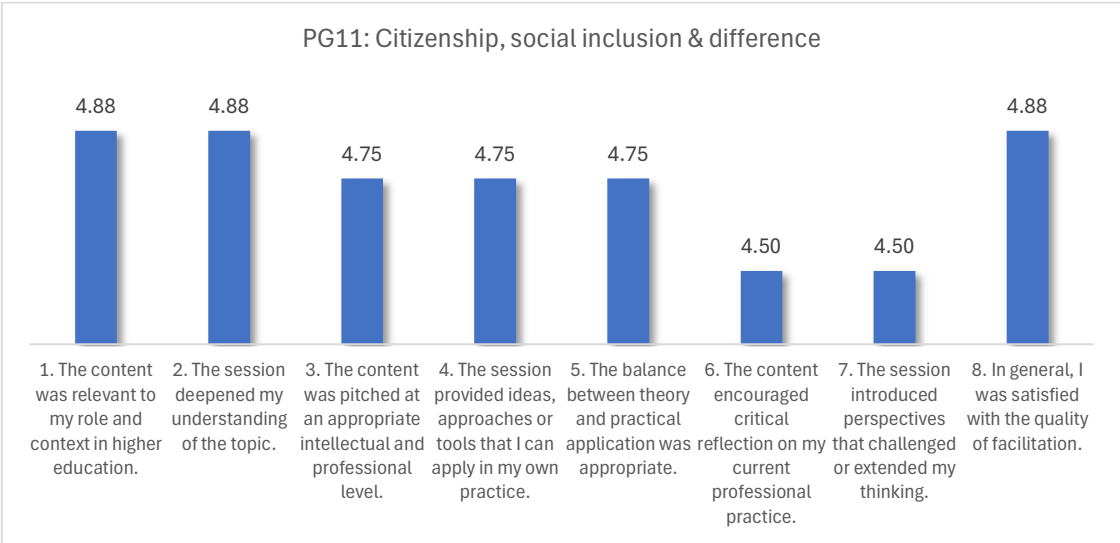
The participant profile indicates that the CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies attracts a highly qualified, professionally experienced and diverse cohort of higher education practitioners. Most participants are employed within the higher education sector, with 75% working at universities or related institutions, and 85% being employed either full-time, part-time or through self-employment. The cohort is academically accomplished, with 75% holding a Master's degree or higher and 70% either already possessing a PhD or actively pursuing doctoral studies, reflecting a strong commitment to continued professional and scholarly development. Participants represent a wide range of institutions, disciplines and functional areas, including education, engineering, health sciences, IT, research, finance and law, thus creating a rich interdisciplinary learning environment. The relatively balanced gender profile (55% female and 45% male) and the predominance of mid-career professionals further suggest that the

programme successfully reaches its intended audience of academics, academic developers and higher education leaders who are well positioned to apply their learning to improve teaching, learning and institutional practice.

## Module content evaluations

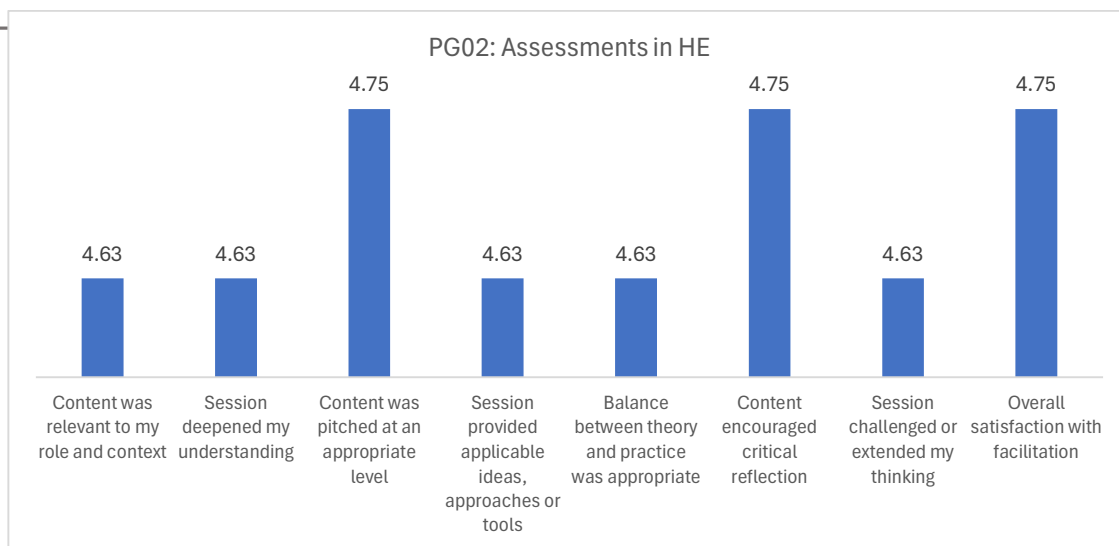
### PG11: Citizenship, Social Inclusion and Difference module

This module was evaluated very positively, with an overall mean score of 4.74/5.00. Three aspects, relevance to participants' roles, deepening understanding of the topic, and overall facilitation quality, received the highest ratings (mean = 4.88), with seven of the eight participants selecting Strongly Agree. The remaining items also scored highly (means ranging from 4.50 to 4.75), indicating strong participant satisfaction with both the content and facilitation. Only a single Neutral response was recorded across all 64 responses, and there were no Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses, reflecting a consistently positive learning experience.



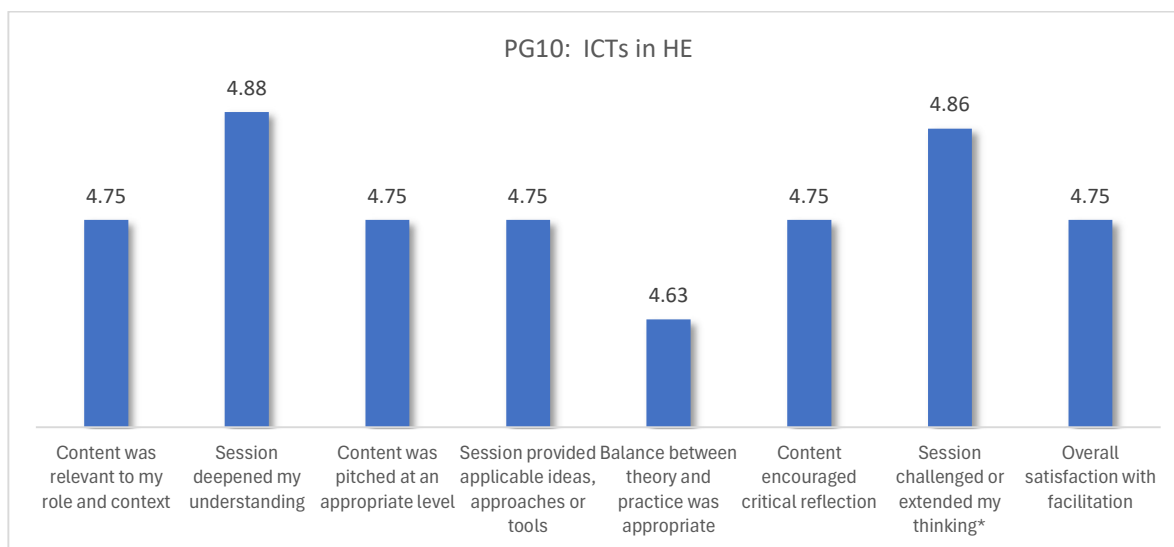
### PG02: Assessments in HE Module

PG02 was rated very positively. The highest-rated items were the appropriateness of the intellectual and professional level, encouragement of critical reflection and overall facilitation, all scoring 4.75. No negative responses were recorded.



### **PG10: ICTs in HE Module**

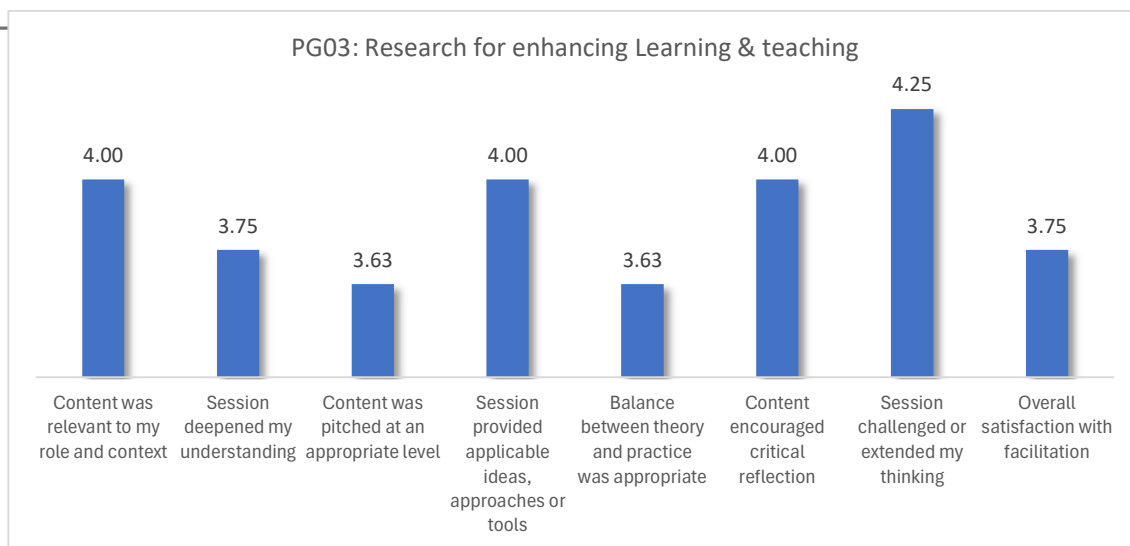
PG10 was the highest-rated of the modules. Participants particularly valued the module's contribution to deepening their understanding, which scored 4.88. The ratings also indicate that the session was highly relevant, professionally pitched and practically useful.



### **PG03: Research for Enhancing Learning and Teaching Module**

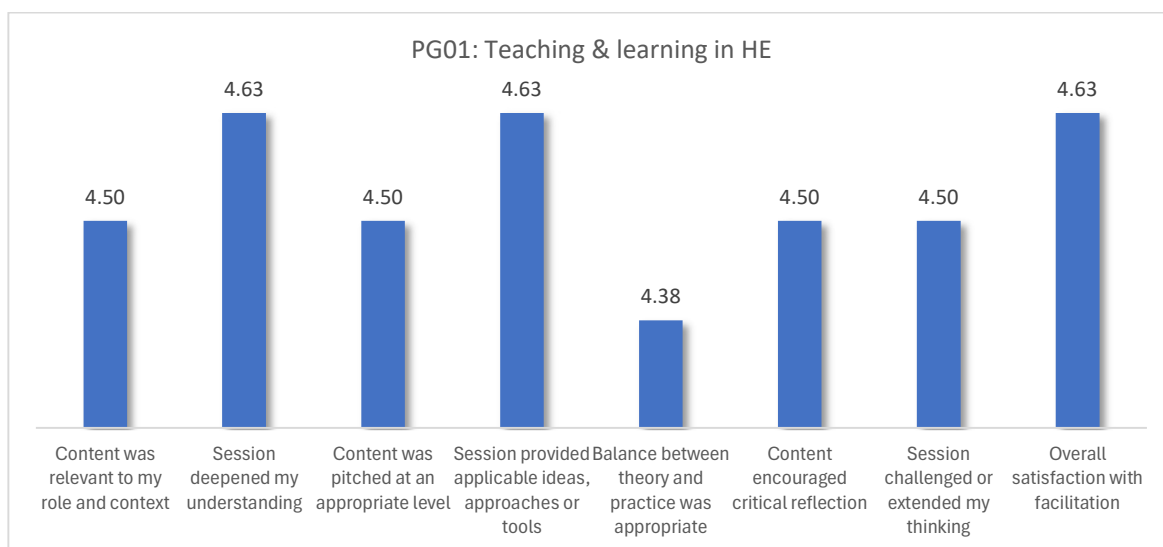
PG03 received the most mixed feedback. Its strongest item was the extent to which the session challenged or extended participants' thinking, with a mean of 4.25. The lowest-rated areas were the appropriateness of the level and the balance between theory and practice, both at 3.63. The 11 Disagree responses suggest that the module may require clearer scaffolding and stronger practical application.



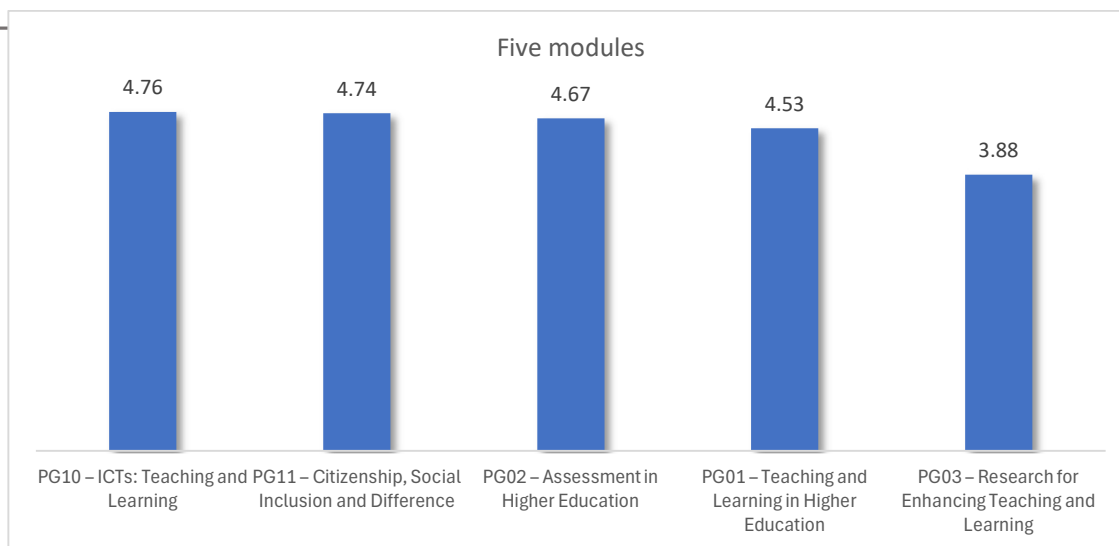


### **PG01: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Module**

PG01 was evaluated positively. Participants were especially satisfied with the extent to which the session deepened their understanding, provided applicable ideas and tools, and was effectively facilitated. The lowest-rated item concerned the balance between theory and practical application, although its score of 4.38 remained positive.

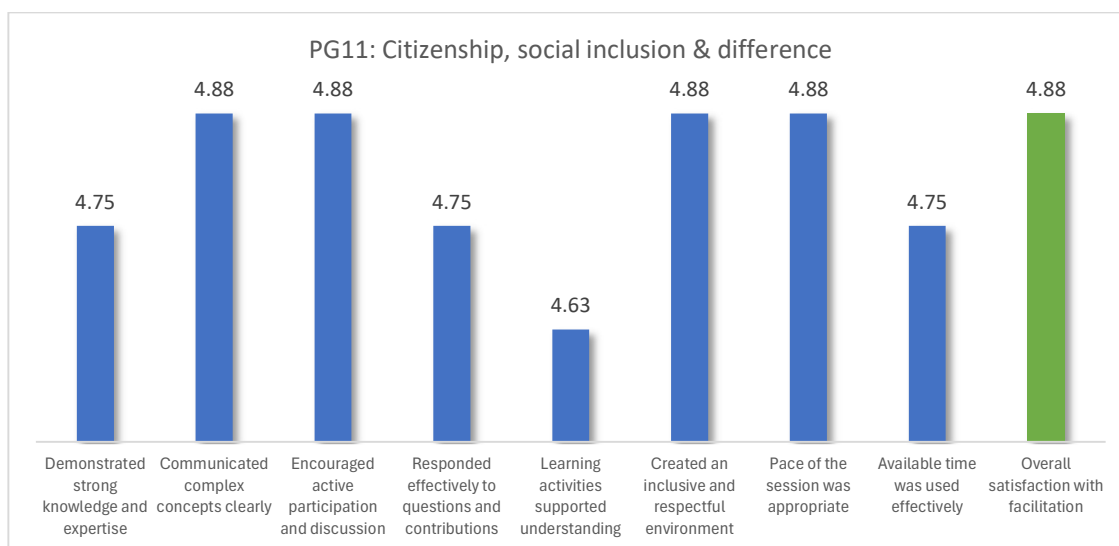


### **Module content comparison**



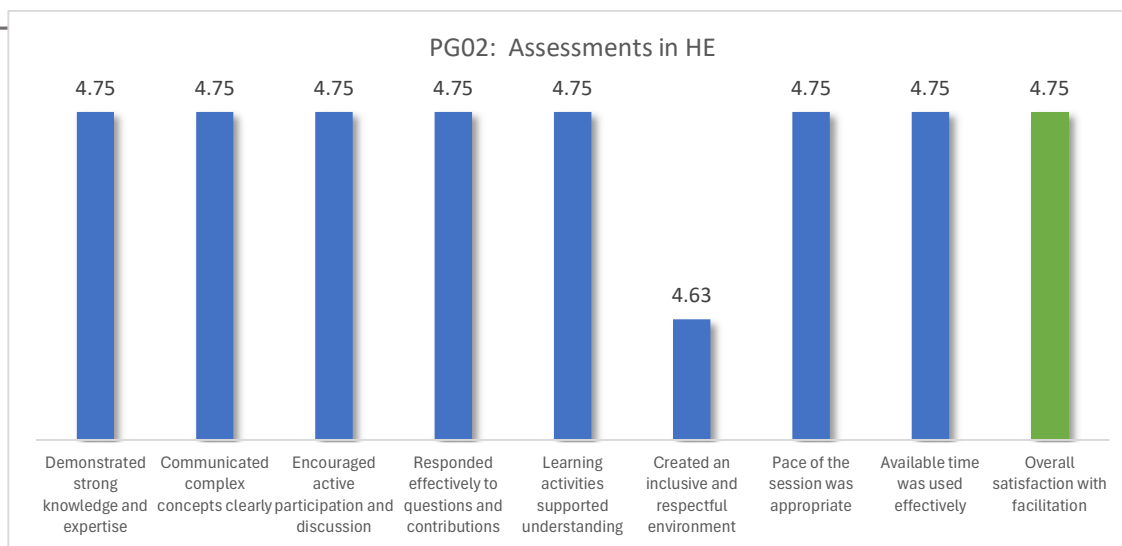
## Feedback about facilitation

### Day 1: PG11 – Citizenship, Social Inclusion and Difference facilitation



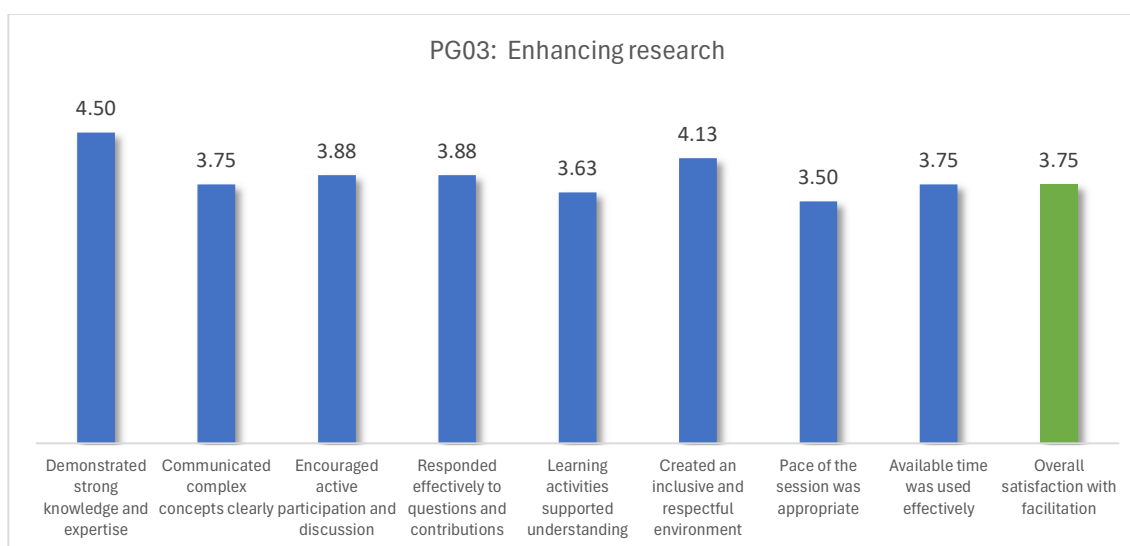
The facilitator received exceptionally strong ratings. Her clearest strengths were communication, participation, inclusivity, pacing and overall facilitation quality, each scoring 4.88. No neutral or negative responses were recorded.

### Day 2: PG02 – Assessments in HE facilitation



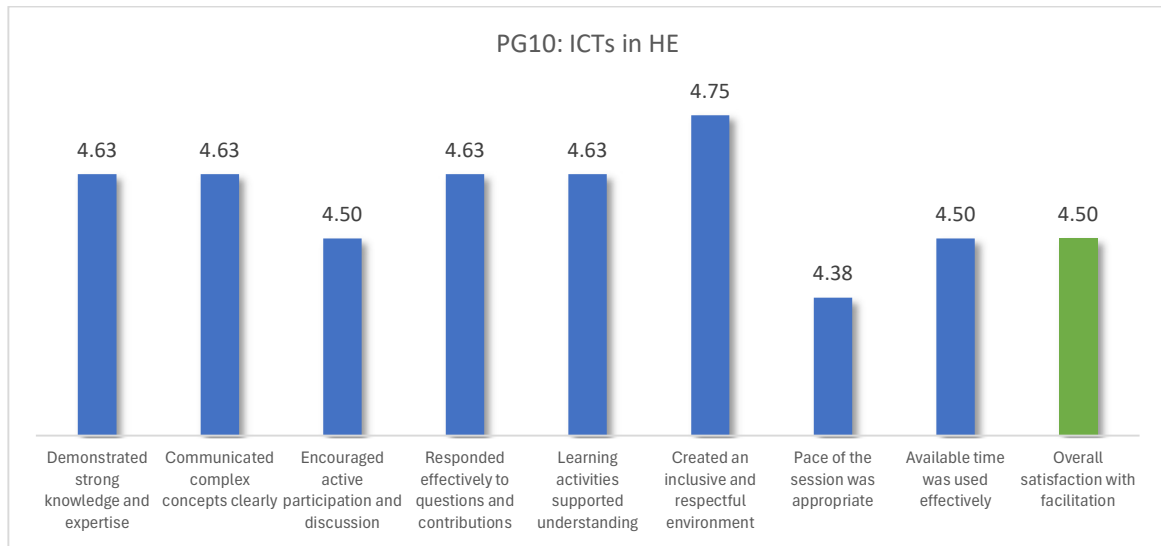
The PG02 facilitator was rated consistently highly across all nine criteria. Eight of the nine items scored 4.75, reflecting strong expertise, clear communication, effective engagement and good time management. Only one neutral response was recorded.

### **Day3: PG03 – Enhancing research facilitation**



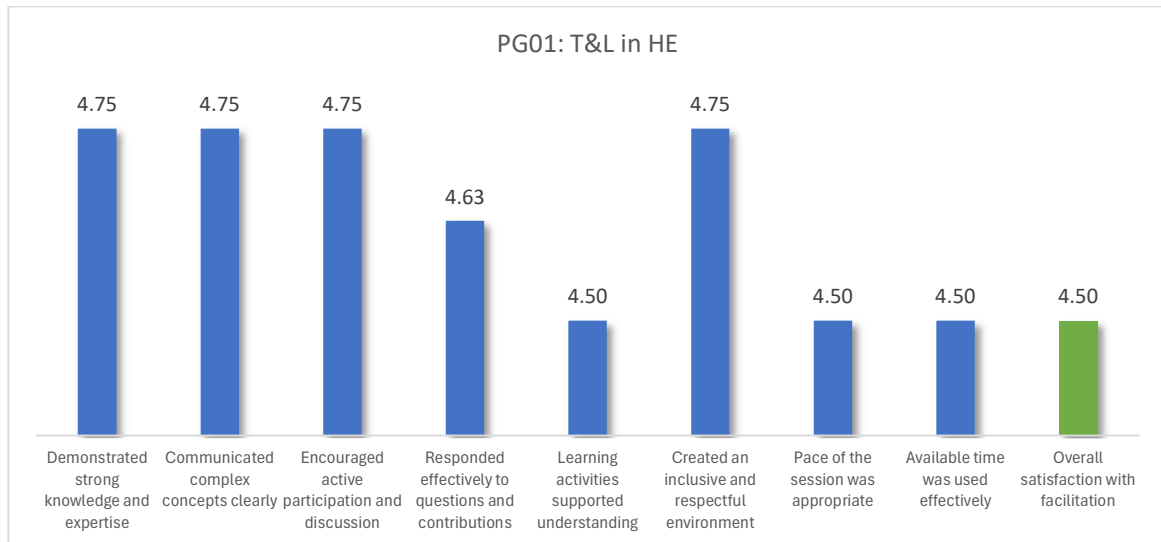
The PG03 facilitator was recognised most strongly for subject knowledge, with a mean of 4.50, and for creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment, at 4.13. The lowest-rated areas were the pace of the session (3.50) and the effectiveness of learning activities in supporting understanding (3.63). This suggests a need for slower pacing, clearer explanation of complex concepts and more structured or applied learning activities.

#### Day 4: PG10 – ICTs: Teaching and Learning Facilitation

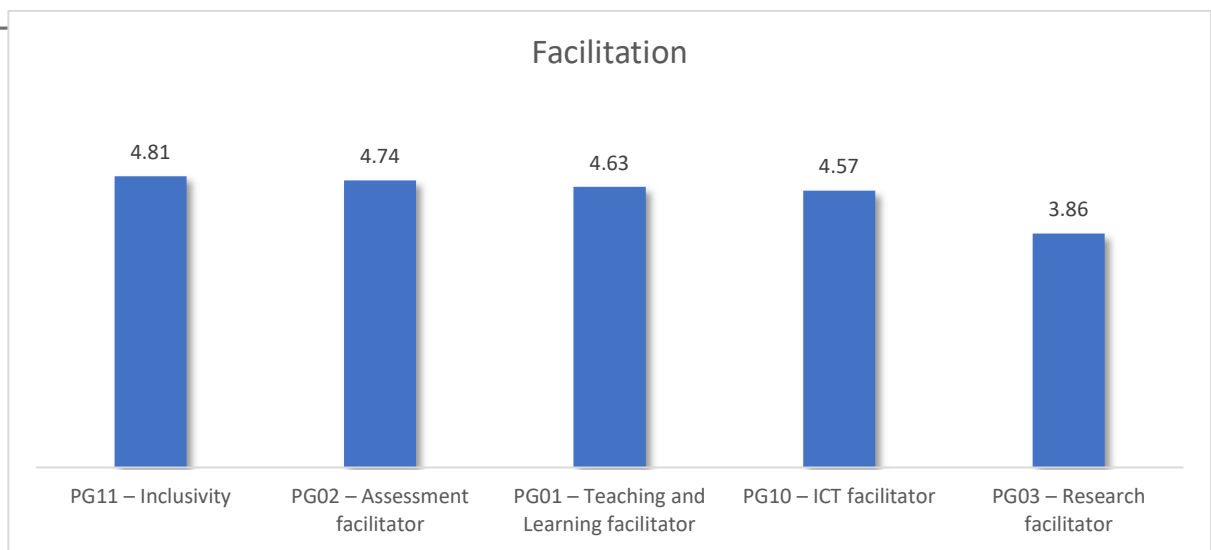


The PG10 facilitator received very positive evaluations. The strongest-rated aspect was the creation of an inclusive and respectful learning environment, scoring 4.75. The pace of the session received the lowest mean, although it remained positive at 4.38.

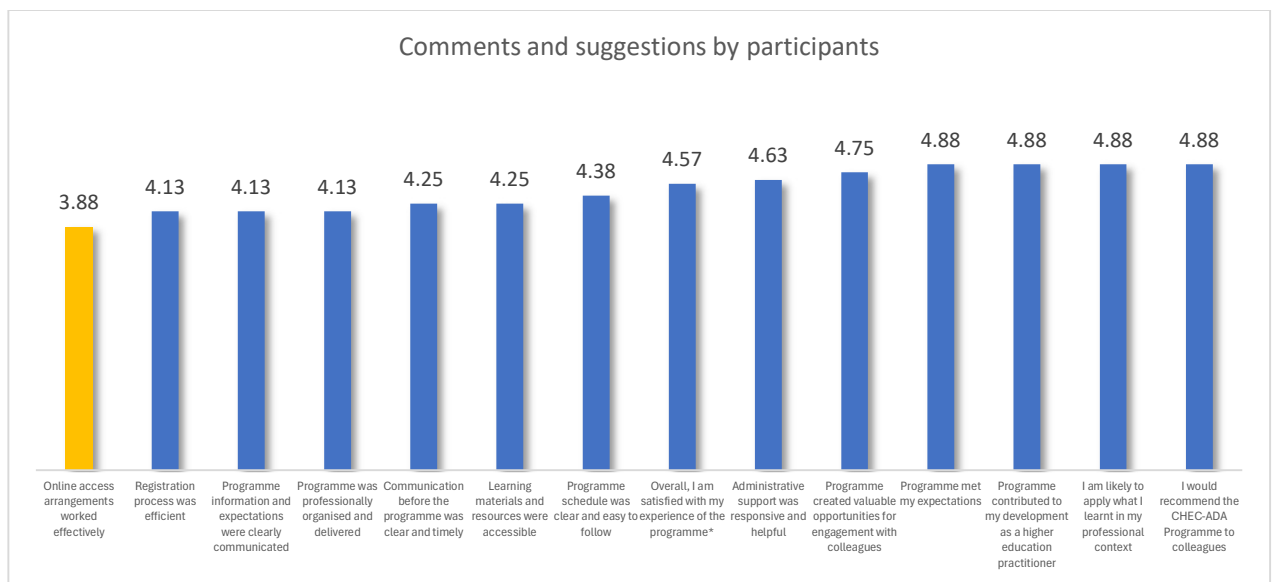
#### Day 5: PG01 – Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Facilitation



The PG01 facilitator was evaluated very positively, particularly for expertise, clarity, active participation and inclusivity, all of which scored 4.75. The learning activities, pace, use of time and overall satisfaction each scored 4.50, indicating positive performance with some scope for further refinement.



## Strengthening the offering



The evaluation demonstrates that the CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies was highly successful, achieving an overall satisfaction rating of 4.46 out of 5. Participants were especially positive about the programme's impact on their professional development, its relevance to higher education practice, and its practical applicability. Four evaluation items achieved an outstanding mean score of 4.88, reflecting exceptionally high levels of satisfaction.

While participants were overwhelmingly positive about the academic quality and value of the programme, the evaluation also identified several operational areas that could be refined. Online access arrangements, registration procedures and programme communication received comparatively lower, although still favourable, ratings. Addressing these logistical issues would likely further enhance participant experience.

The results indicate that the programme was perceived as academically rigorous, professionally relevant and highly valuable for higher education practitioners, with participants expressing a strong willingness to recommend it to colleagues and to implement the knowledge and skills gained within their own institutional contexts.

## Qualitative feedback

### Most valuable insights and learning

Participants highlighted several interconnected areas of value. A strong theme was the move towards more reflective, inclusive and student-centred teaching. Participants valued learning about constructive alignment, authentic assessment, co-creation, students as partners and the importance of not making assumptions about student needs.

Another major insight concerned the role of artificial intelligence in higher education. Participants began to view AI less as a threat to be policed and more as a tool that can support teaching, learning, assessment and research. The idea of designing AI-resilient assessment and helping students use AI ethically and critically was especially valued.

Participants appreciated exposure to different perspectives, dialogue with colleagues from other institutions, active learning strategies, teaching tools and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Several described the programme as challenging their assumptions and fundamentally reshaping how they think about higher education practice.

### Intended application in professional practice

Participants intend to apply the learning by:

- redesigning curricula and learning activities;
- using constructive alignment and authentic assessment;
- creating more inclusive and participatory classrooms;
- involving students in programme and curriculum development;
- integrating AI into teaching, assessment and research;
- developing AI literacy and AI-resilient assessment briefs;
- strengthening Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities;
- sharing insights with colleagues; and
- creating more connected learning opportunities across institutional silos.

The responses indicate a clear intention to move from theory to practice, particularly through student-centred teaching, co-creation and reflective curriculum design.

### Improvements to content and programme structure

The most common concern was the intensity of the programme. Participants felt that too much material was covered within a short period, making some sessions tiring and difficult to absorb. Several suggested shorter sessions, more breaks, half-day sessions or extending the programme over 10 to 14 days.

The research session was identified as particularly dense. Participants recommended allowing more time for activities, reflection, discussion and reporting back before moving to the next topic.

### Suggestions

- more practical and discipline-specific examples;
- more opportunities for in-person engagement;
- additional time for activities and discussion;
- greater attention to decolonising education; and
- making the Capstone Project requirements available at the beginning of the programme.



A number of participants, however, reported that the content and structure were satisfactory and required no major changes.

### **Improvements to facilitation**

Facilitation was viewed very positively. Participants described facilitators as knowledgeable, dialogical, engaging and supportive of peer learning. Several explicitly stated that the facilitation was excellent and required no improvement.

The main concerns were not about facilitator competence but about:

- the amount of information presented within limited time;
- lengthy sessions;
- insufficient breaks;
- technical difficulties; and
- limited time to process unfamiliar concepts and complete activities.

The feedback suggests that the primary improvement would be to adjust pacing and reduce cognitive overload rather than substantially changing the facilitation approach.

### **Improvements to administration and organisation**

Most participants regarded the programme as well organised and the administrative support as good. However, several practical improvements were proposed:

- provide the Capstone brief at the start of the programme;
- distribute learning materials before sessions;
- reduce the number and length of emails;
- provide shorter, clearer and more direct instructions;
- simplify online access arrangements;
- use one consistent Teams link;
- avoid over-reliance on a complicated Teams workspace; and
- consider using a shared Google Drive or similarly accessible repository.

The comments suggest that administrative communication was generally effective but could be made more streamlined, consistent and user-friendly.

### **Additional topics suggested**

The most frequently requested area for further exploration was AI, including:

- ethical use of AI;
- AI in teaching and learning;
- AI in research;
- AI in postgraduate research;
- AI and assessment; and
- AI in relation to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Other requested topics included:

- research in teaching and learning;
- the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning;
- decolonising education;
- the relationship between academics and academic developers; and
- discipline-specific applications of the programme concepts.

These responses indicate demand for follow-up workshops or advanced sessions focused particularly on AI, SoTL and applied higher education research.

## **The participant experience**

Participants described the programme as:

- enlightening;
- thought-provoking;
- transformative;
- enriching;
- exceptionally valuable;
- practically relevant; and
- professionally affirming.

Several comments indicated a deep personal and professional impact, including statements that the programme had “rewired” their thinking and transformed their understanding of teaching and learning.

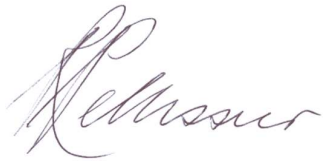
## **Conclusion**

The qualitative feedback indicates that the CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies was experienced as a highly valuable and transformative professional learning opportunity. Its greatest strengths were the quality of facilitation, exposure to new pedagogical perspectives, practical teaching tools, cross-institutional dialogue and the integration of AI, inclusion and authentic assessment.

The principal area for improvement is the pace and density of the programme. Participants would benefit from shorter sessions, additional breaks, more time for practical activities and reflection, earlier access to materials and Capstone requirements, and simpler administrative communication. Despite these concerns, the overall sentiment was overwhelmingly positive, with strong evidence that participants intend to apply the learning in their professional contexts.

## **Contribution to Higher Education**

The CHEC-ADA Programme in Higher Education Studies contributes significantly to academic staff development in South Africa by developing educators who are not only disciplinary experts but also scholarly practitioners. By combining contemporary educational theory with authentic application, the programme equips participants to improve teaching quality, enhance student success and contribute to institutional transformation. It also strengthens collaboration across the four CHEC universities, fostering a community of practice committed to advancing excellence in higher education teaching and learning.



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Cape Higher Education Consortium (RF) NPC Reg. No. 2003/003131/08

## ANNEXURE A: From Insight to Intervention: Applying Learning in Higher Education Practice (HE Studies Capstone Projects)

The Capstone Project formed the culminating assessment of the CHEC-ADA Higher Education Studies Programme, providing participants with the opportunity to synthesise their learning and apply it to an authentic challenge within their own higher education context. Rather than serving as a traditional academic assignment, the capstone required participants to demonstrate thoughtful inquiry, critical reflection, evidence-informed decision-making and the practical application of programme learning to improve teaching and learning practice.

Participants were guided by the central question:

*How can I use what I have learnt in the HE Studies Programme to understand and improve one aspect of higher education practice in my own context?*

The Capstone is not about repeating programme content, but to demonstrate thoughtful inquiry, critical reflection, meaningful application of programme learning and a realistic commitment to improving higher education practice. It is about demonstrating how your thinking has developed, how you have applied your learning, and how this learning can contribute to improved higher education practice.

### The Capstone Project consists of two connected components:

1. A Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) showing your learning journey, inquiry, evidence, application and reflection.
2. A Capstone Presentation communicating your key insights, proposed response and intended impact.

### PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

Your Portfolio of Evidence should provide a concise and purposeful account of your journey from identifying an issue to developing an evidence-informed response. The portfolio is not a collection of everything you completed during the programme. Select evidence that helps you tell the story of your learning and application (10 pages).

Your portfolio should include:

- ✓ Context and challenge
- ✓ Understanding the issue
- ✓ Applying programme learning
- ✓ Evidence of the learning journey
- ✓ Proposed intervention
- ✓ Critical reflection and next steps

### CAPSTONE PRESENTATION

Each participant will deliver an **8-minute presentation**, followed by approximately **5 minutes for questions and discussion**.

A suggested six-slide structure is:

- Slide 1: The challenge
- Slide 2: Why it matters
- Slide 3: What I see differently now
- Slide 4: My evidence
- Slide 5: My proposed response
- Slide 6: From here to action

## CHECKLIST

Does it

- ✓ Improve a practice?
- ✓ Address a challenge?
- ✓ Design an innovation?
- ✓ Investigate an HE question?

Each participant therefore presented a short summary presentation at the Capstone event and submitted a ten-page Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) documenting their learning journey from identifying a challenge to proposing an evidence-informed intervention, accompanied by an oral presentation communicating the anticipated impact of their project. The portfolios followed a common structure comprising:

- Context and challenge
- Understanding the issue
- Applying programme learning
- Evidence of the learning journey
- Proposed intervention
- Critical reflection and next steps.

Although participants represented diverse disciplines, including Engineering, Accounting, Information Technology, Biomedical Sciences, Academic Development and Health Sciences. Their projects revealed remarkably consistent concerns regarding the future of higher education. Collectively, the portfolios illustrate how the programme enabled participants to move beyond isolated teaching techniques towards scholarly, evidence-informed educational innovation.

The thirteen portfolios submitted, addressed a wide range of contemporary higher education challenges. While each project was situated within its own disciplinary and institutional context, common themes emerged that demonstrate the collective impact of the programme.

| Programme Theme                                | Examples from PoEs                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social justice, inclusion and decolonisation   | Mohammed Rahman, Boitumelo Diale, Dominique Pellissier, Tawanda Zininga, Anthea Jacobs |
| Authentic assessment and curriculum design     | Katelyn Johnson, Lerato Thabane, Michael Rampedi, Jacqui Kew, Nelia Frade              |
| Student-centred learning and active pedagogies | Michael Rampedi, Katelyn Johnson, Dominique Pellissier, Tawanda Zininga                |
| AI and the future of Higher Education          | Lerato Thabane, Anthea Jacobs, Tawanda Zininga                                         |

## Emerging themes

### Theme 1: Reimagining Assessment for Authentic Learning

Perhaps the strongest theme emerging across the portfolios was the recognition that traditional assessment no longer adequately prepares students for professional practice. Participants challenged assessment models based primarily on memorisation, procedural recall and high-stakes examinations. Instead, they proposed authentic, process-oriented and contextually relevant assessment strategies.

Examples included:

- Katelyn Johnson redesigning Hydraulic Engineering around authentic engineering problems and problem-based learning.
- Lerato Thabane transforming Project Management assessments to incorporate ethical AI use rather than attempting to prohibit it.
- Michael Rampedi using diagnostic assessment and learning analytics to uncover conceptual misconceptions hidden behind satisfactory examination results.
- Jacqui Kew and Dr Nelia Frade emphasising constructive alignment, authentic learning and reflective assessment.

Collectively these projects illustrate a significant paradigm shift from assessment of learning towards assessment for learning.

### Theme 2: Humanising Higher Education

A second dominant theme centred on creating learning environments where students experience belonging, recognition and meaningful participation. Participants recognised that effective learning depends not only on curriculum content but also on relationships, identity and inclusion.

Examples include:

- Boitumelo Diale, who explored how a highly regulated accounting curriculum could still be humanised through care, translanguaging and culturally responsive teaching.
- Dominique Pellissier, who developed inclusive approaches for neurodivergent students using Universal Design for Learning.
- Anthea Jacobs, who introduced empathy mapping and pedagogies of mattering into academic development.
- Tawanda Zininga, who redesigned large undergraduate science teaching around participation rather than passive content transmission.

These projects collectively emphasise that inclusive pedagogy is not simply about accommodating difference, but about intentionally designing learning environments where every student has opportunities to succeed.

### **Theme 3: Decolonisation and Social Justice**

Many participants situated their projects within broader questions of epistemic justice and curriculum transformation. Rather than viewing decolonisation solely as curriculum replacement, participants approached it as creating curricula that recognise multiple knowledge traditions, languages and lived experiences.

Examples include:

- Mohammed Rahman, who examined epistemic exclusion within university curricula and proposed greater inclusion of African and Global South knowledge systems.
- Boitumelo Diale, who incorporated multilingual pedagogies and culturally responsive examples within accounting education.
- Tawanda Zininga, who redesigned Biochemistry teaching around African health challenges and locally relevant scientific examples.
- Anthea Jacobs, whose work integrated social justice into academic development.

These projects collectively demonstrate that curriculum transformation requires attention to:

- whose knowledge is represented;
- whose experiences are valued; and
- how students gain meaningful epistemic access.

### **Theme 4: Artificial Intelligence as a Learning Partner**

Artificial Intelligence emerged as one of the most contemporary themes across the portfolios. Rather than perceiving AI as a threat, participants explored how it can become a catalyst for deeper learning when integrated responsibly.

Notable examples include:

- Lerato Thabane, who designed AI-enabled assessments grounded in UNESCO AI competencies and Student-as-Partners principles.
- Tawanda Zininga, who proposed AI-supported conceptual learning within Biochemistry.
- Anthea Jacobs, who incorporated AI into academic development, empathy mapping and authentic assessment design.

A consistent message across these projects is that higher education should move from policing AI towards developing AI-literate graduates capable of ethical, critical and reflective use of emerging technologies.

### **Theme 5: Reflective Practice and Scholarly Teaching**

Every portfolio demonstrated evidence of reflective practice. Participants did not simply describe innovations; they critically examined their assumptions, evaluated evidence and positioned themselves as scholarly practitioners committed to continuous improvement. Several projects explicitly embraced the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), including those of Anthea

Jacobs, Chad Frans, Jacqui Kew, Stacy Beukes, Dr Nelia Frade. Reflection became the mechanism through which participants transformed everyday teaching challenges into opportunities for scholarly inquiry and educational innovation.

## Discussion of projects

Several common characteristics emerged. The projects were:

- grounded in authentic institutional challenges;
- informed by current higher education scholarship;
- evidence-based rather than opinion-driven;
- focused on improving practice rather than merely describing problems;
- contextually relevant to participants' own teaching environments;
- aligned with the principles of reflective practice and continuous improvement.

None of the projects proposed large-scale institutional reform. Instead, participants identified meaningful changes within their own spheres of influence, demonstrating that educational transformation often begins with small, well-designed interventions.

## Programme impact

The capstone projects can be classified into four overarching themes across the HE learning and teaching space:

| Transforming the curriculum                                      | Transforming assessment                                                                    | Transforming the learning experience                                                     | Transforming academic practice                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Decolonisation, inclusion, contextualisation, curriculum renewal | Authentic assessment, AI-enabled assessment, constructive alignment, diagnostic assessment | Humanising pedagogy, UDL, active learning, problem-based learning, AI-supported learning | Reflective practice, scholarly teaching, SoTL, evidence-based innovation |

The portfolios demonstrate that participants developed significant capabilities in:

- critical reflection;
- curriculum design;
- authentic assessment;
- educational research;
- inclusive pedagogy;
- evidence-informed decision-making;
- scholarly teaching;
- educational leadership.

The capstone projects illustrate a clear shift in participants' professional identities. Rather than viewing themselves primarily as disciplinary experts, participants increasingly positioned themselves as scholarly educators capable of systematically investigating and improving their own teaching practice.



The progression evident across the portfolios reflects movement from content coverage to learning design; from teaching to facilitating learning; from assessment of knowledge to assessment for professional capability; from lecturer-centred instruction to student partnership; from intuition to evidence-informed practice; and from isolated classroom innovation to scholarship of teaching and learning.

## Conclusion

The CHEC-ADA Higher Education Studies Programme Capstone Projects demonstrate that participants successfully translated programme learning into practical educational innovation. Guided by the overarching question of how to improve one aspect of higher education practice in their own context, participants produced thoughtful, evidence-informed and contextually relevant responses to contemporary challenges in higher education. Although situated across diverse disciplines and institutions, the portfolios reveal a coherent vision of higher education characterised by authentic learning, inclusive pedagogies, ethical engagement with artificial intelligence, curriculum transformation and scholarly reflection.

The capstone projects therefore represent more than the culmination of an academic development programme. Collectively, they provide compelling evidence of a growing community of reflective practitioners committed to transforming higher education through inquiry, innovation and evidence-informed practice. Their work demonstrates that meaningful institutional change begins with educators who are willing to critically examine their own practice and intentionally redesign learning to better serve the diverse needs of contemporary students.

## ANNEXURE B: PoE summaries

| Participant           | Theme                                                                       | Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ideas and proposed intervention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Value and contribution                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anthea Jacobs (UWC)   | Weaving the Threads: Towards an Integrated Approach to Academic Development | As a Learning and Teaching Specialist supporting academics across the Faculty of EMS, Anthea recognised that professional development around curriculum renewal, AI, assessment, inclusion and SoLT often occurred as isolated initiatives. | Proposes an integrated academic development model that intentionally connects social justice, authentic assessment, AI, curriculum design, pedagogies of mattering and Scholarship of Learning and Teaching (SoLT). Develops practical tools such as empathy mapping and authentic assessment blueprints to support lecturers. | Moves academic development from fragmented workshops to an integrated professional learning ecosystem that strengthens teaching practice and student success. |
| Boitumelo Diale (UCT) | Journey Towards Becoming Reflective                                         | Teaches first-year Accounting within a highly standardised                                                                                                                                                                                  | Explores how humanising pedagogy can exist                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Demonstrates that meaningful transformation lies                                                                                                              |

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|                                           | Practitioners Who Intentionally Humanise the Classroom Space       | SAICA-accredited curriculum where content is prescribed but pedagogy remains flexible. Many students come from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.                                | within professional programmes through teacher positionality, care, decoloniality, translanguaging, representation and culturally responsive teaching. Focuses on creating belonging without compromising professional standards.               | not only in <i>what</i> is taught but in <i>how</i> it is taught, offering a practical model for inclusive teaching within regulated professional curricula. |
| Chad Frans                                | Reflective Practice for Intentional Learning and Teaching          | Reflects on his own teaching context and identifies opportunities to improve student engagement and learning through scholarly teaching.                                              | Uses reflective practice, authentic learning and student-centred pedagogies to redesign learning experiences and improve alignment between curriculum, teaching and assessment.                                                                 | Reinforces reflective practice as a cornerstone of continuous professional development and evidence-informed teaching.                                       |
| Dominique Pellissier                      | Inclusive Teaching for Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education | Lectures in a private higher education institution with small classes but increasing numbers of students experiencing ADHD, autism, dyslexia and other neurodevelopmental conditions. | Applies Universal Design for Learning (UDL), multimodal teaching, flexible assessment and technology-enhanced learning to create inclusive learning environments. Advocates a strengths-based rather than deficit-based view of neurodiversity. | Offers a comprehensive framework for making higher education more accessible while maintaining academic standards and recognising learner diversity.         |
| Dr Nelia Frade                            | Reflective Curriculum Enhancement through Authentic Learning       | Reflects on disciplinary teaching practice and identifies opportunities to better align learning outcomes with authentic professional practice.                                       | Applies theories of constructivism, authentic assessment and reflective practice to redesign curriculum and improve student engagement and learning.                                                                                            | Demonstrates how scholarly teaching can improve curriculum quality and strengthen graduate readiness.                                                        |
| Katelyn Johnson (Stellenbosch University) | From Assessing for Recall to Designing for Learning:               | Fourth-year Hydraulic Engineering students performed well in examinations but                                                                                                         | Redesigns the module around authentic engineering                                                                                                                                                                                               | Provides a strong example of curriculum redesign that                                                                                                        |

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|                       | Reimagining Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Hydraulic Engineering through Problem-Based Learning | struggled to transfer knowledge to authentic engineering practice.                                                                                                                    | problems using problem-based learning, constructivism, experiential learning and constructive alignment. Introduces authentic assessment that mirrors professional engineering practice rather than procedural recall.                                             | develops critical thinking, professional judgement and graduate employability rather than examination performance alone.                                      |
| Lerato Thabane        | Re-imagining IT Project Management Assessments in the Age of Artificial Intelligence                  | Third-year Information Technology students increasingly use generative AI to complete project work without demonstrating critical understanding or ethical AI use.                    | Reimagines assessment through Constructivism and Student-as-Partners (SaP), embedding AI literacy, ethical AI use and digital citizenship using UNESCO and UCT AI competency frameworks. Students co-create assessment practices rather than being policed.        | Moves the conversation from preventing AI use to developing responsible AI-enabled graduates capable of critical evaluation and ethical practice.             |
| Michael Rampedi (MUT) | From Insight to Intervention: Diagnostic-Driven Visual Scaffolding in Health Chemistry                | First-year Biomedical Sciences students entered university with uneven science preparation, language barriers and structural learning constraints, despite achieving high pass rates. | Uses detailed learning analytics, diagnostic assessment and visual scaffolding to identify hidden conceptual misconceptions that aggregate marks conceal. Designs targeted interventions for difficult chemistry concepts before misconceptions become entrenched. | Demonstrates the power of evidence-informed teaching, showing that learning analytics can reveal conceptual weaknesses that traditional assessment overlooks. |
| Mochina Mphuthi       | Applying Reflective Teaching to Improve Student Learning                                              | Reflects critically on teaching practice within her disciplinary context to strengthen student engagement and learning outcomes.                                                      | Applies student-centred learning, authentic assessment and reflective practice to redesign learning activities and                                                                                                                                                 | Illustrates how continuous reflection enables meaningful curriculum improvement and enhanced student learning.                                                |

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|                                           |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                        | improve student participation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Mohammed Rahman (CPUT)                    | From Insight to Intervention: Applying Learning in Higher Education Practice                                | Examines how Eurocentric curricula continue to marginalise African and Global South knowledges within higher education institutions.                   | Draws on Freire, decolonial theory and social justice scholarship to propose curriculum transformation that promotes epistemic access, participatory learning and recognition of African knowledge systems.                                                                                          | Makes a compelling theoretical and practical contribution to curriculum decolonisation by linking epistemic justice with student belonging and meaningful participation. |
| Tawanda Zininga (Stellenbosch University) | Enhancing the Teaching of Second-Year Metabolism through Decolonised, Inclusive and AI-Supported Pedagogies | Teaches approximately 800 Biochemistry students where traditional content-heavy teaching encouraged memorisation rather than conceptual understanding. | Develops a "Decolonised Metabolism Learning Ecosystem" integrating active learning, AI-supported learning, Learning 3.0, authentic African case studies and collaborative knowledge construction. Students investigate locally relevant health challenges rather than memorising metabolic pathways. | Demonstrates how even very large science classes can become participatory, contextually relevant and inclusive while maintaining scientific rigour.                      |
| Jacqui Kew                                | Strengthening Learning through Authentic Assessment and Reflective Practice                                 | Reflects on enhancing teaching practice through evidence-informed curriculum design and assessment innovation.                                         | Applies authentic assessment, constructive alignment, inclusive pedagogy and reflective practice to strengthen learning design and student engagement.                                                                                                                                               | Shows how intentional curriculum redesign can improve both teaching quality and student learning experiences.                                                            |
| Stacy Beukes                              | Transforming Learning and Teaching through Reflective Practice                                              | Explores opportunities to strengthen higher education teaching through reflective curriculum innovation within her own context.                        | Integrates student-centred learning, authentic assessment, reflective practice and educational scholarship into curriculum redesign.                                                                                                                                                                 | Demonstrates sustained professional growth through the application of evidence-based teaching and learning principles.                                                   |
| Lucille Valentine                         | Enhancing Student                                                                                           | Investigates the challenges of engaging                                                                                                                | Applies concepts from the CHEC HE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Presents a practical                                                                                                                                                     |

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| Engagement and Inclusive Assessment in Online Lean Six Sigma Education | fourth-year, part-time NQF Level 7 engineering students studying online. Key barriers include work commitments, limited workplace experience, language diversity, technology constraints, and inclusive assessment for students with disabilities. | Studies Programme, particularly inclusive pedagogy, authentic assessment, the Cynefin Framework, and Aylward's Competency Framework, to redesign assessment practices. Proposes matching learning activities and assessment approaches to students' competency levels and the complexity of their learning contexts while embedding Universal Design for Learning principles. | framework for improving participation, engagement and assessment quality in online professional programmes. The project demonstrates how reflective, evidence-informed curriculum design can enhance inclusion, learner success and authentic workplace learning without compromising academic standards. |
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