

Offline Conversations About **Online Learning** in Higher Education **2026**

A Face-to-Face Indaba on Human Connection,
Student Engagement and the Future of Digital Learning



E-LEARNING



VIRTUAL
CLASSROOM



AI-POWERED
LEARNING

AI Learning Insights

78%

Engagement
Score

Learning Progress



Assessment Performance



Recommended for You

- Adaptive Learning Path
- Digital Library
- Critical Thinking



The human conversation behind digital learning



Date: 18-19 October 2026



Venue: Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside



Format: Face-to-Face Indaba + Practical Workshop



Hosted by: SkillingSA



Website: www.skillingsa.co.za

Why Meet Face-to-Face About Online Learning?

It may seem ironic to host a face-to-face conference on online learning. But that is exactly the point.

As higher education becomes more digital, institutions must ask whether students are becoming more connected — or more isolated. Online learning has expanded access, flexibility and innovation, but it has also raised difficult questions about student engagement, lecturer presence, academic integrity, digital fatigue, assessment quality and student belonging.

This Indaba brings higher education professionals together in person to have the human conversation that digital learning urgently requires.



“

The more digital higher education becomes, the more intentional human connection must be.

”



HUMAN

Real conversations build real understanding.



PERSPECTIVE

Shared insights from across the sector.



COLLABORATION

Stronger together in a digital world.



PURPOSE

Design better learning experiences for all.



Engagement



Inclusion



Integrity



Excellence



18–19
October 2026



Holiday Inn
Johannesburg
Sunnyside



Face-to-Face
Indaba + Practical
Workshop



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Digital Learning Has Advanced – But Human Connection Must Catch Up

Key challenges facing higher education



1. Student Disengagement

Students may log in but not actively participate.



2. Digital Fatigue

Online learning can create exhaustion, isolation and reduced motivation.



3. Lecturer Visibility

Students need feedback, presence and guidance – not only uploaded content.



4. AI and Academic Integrity

Assessment must be redesigned for a new era.



5. Digital Inequality

Access to data, devices and connectivity remains uneven.



6. Weak Support Pathways

At-risk students can disappear quietly in online environments.

“
Online access
is not the same
as student
success.”



This conference gives institutions practical strategies, fresh perspectives and real solutions to close the gap between digital delivery and human connection.

• *Technology delivers learning. People deliver transformation.* •



18–19 October 2026



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Who Should Attend?

Help institutions quickly identify the right delegates.



1. OUR DELEGATES – WHO WE BRING TOGETHER

 Deputy Vice-Chancellors: Teaching and Learning	 Directors of Teaching and Learning	 E-Learning and Digital Learning Managers
 E-Learning and Digital Learning Managers	 Academic Development Practitioners	 Faculty Deans and HODs
 Instructional Designers	 Student Support Services Managers	 Assessment and Quality Assurance Officers
 Student Success Practitioners	 Lecturers and Programme Coordinators	 ICT in Education Teams
 Assessment and Quality Assurance Officers	 Learning Analytics Teams	 TVET Academic Managers

2. THE DELEGATE JOURNEY – FROM INSIGHT TO IMPACT



CHALLENGE

Real issues in digital learning and student connection.



CONVERSATION

Face-to-face dialogue that builds understanding across roles.



TOOLS

Practical strategies, frameworks and shared solutions.



IMPLEMENTATION

Actionable plans to drive human-centred digital learning forward.

3. WHAT DELEGATES WILL GAIN

- ✓ Practical strategies to improve online student engagement
- ✓ Tools for rebuilding lecturer-student connection
- ✓ Ideas for AI-responsive assessment redesign
- ✓ Better understanding of digital inclusion challenges
- ✓ Methods for identifying disengaged students early
- ✓ A practical framework for human-centred digital learning
- ✓ Action plans to take back to departments and institutions



DAY 1: STRATEGIC INDABA

Why Meet Face-to-Face About Online Learning?



Day 1 Date: 18 October 2026

SESSION TITLE & PURPOSE

SPEAKER



08:50 Opening Remarks

Set the tone for the paradox: digital learning needs human leadership, honest reflection and academic belonging.



Mlamuli Nkomo

Projects Manager | SkillingSA



09:00 Opening Keynote

Provide a strategic keynote on what digital learning has improved, what it has weakened, and why human presence still matters.



Lynn Chambers

Academic Staff Development |
Centre for Innovation in Learning
and Teaching | University of
Cape Town



09:45 Session 1

From E-Learning to Human-Centred Digital Learning

Move delegates beyond technology/platform thinking towards interaction, feedback, participation and belonging.



Prof George Ochieng

Head of Faculty |
Vaal University of Technology



11:00 Session 2

Student Engagement Beyond LMS Logins: Are Students Present, Participating or Merely Connected?

Challenge the assumption that access and logins equal participation, progress or learning.



Salomien Boshoff

Management Sciences |
Akademia



11:45 Session 3

Lecturer Presence in Online Learning: Making Students Feel That Someone Is There

Help lecturers and instructional designers understand presence, responsiveness, trust and feedback in digital classrooms.



Praneetha Jugdeo

Head of Campus | SACAP



12:30 Session 4

Are Students More Connected or More Isolated in the Digital Learning Era?

Bring multiple perspectives on belonging, loneliness, motivation, digital fatigue and face-to-face contact.



Chipa Maimela

Senior Coordinator: Training |
University of Pretoria



14:00 Session 5

AI, Online Assessment and Academic Integrity: Rethinking What We Assess

Address how AI disrupts assignments and how institutions should redesign assessment rather than only detect cheating.



Dr Felicity Coughlan

Chief Academic Officer |
NewBridge Graduate Institute



14:45 Session 6

Digital Inclusion in Higher Education: Who Is Still Being Left Behind?

Show that digital learning must address inequality, access, rural realities, disability, language and student confidence.



Eric Mhlanga

University of Johannesburg



15:50 Session 7

Learning Analytics and Early Warning Systems: Using Data to Bring Students Back Before They Disappear

Show how institutions can use LMS and student data ethically to trigger timely support interventions.



Sibusiso Mavuso

Academic Centre of Excellence
for The IIE and ADVTECH



16:35 Closing Reflection

Synthesize Day 1, identify institutional questions, and prepare delegates for the practical toolkit workshop.



**Conference Chairperson /
Senior Facilitator**



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DAY 2: PRACTICAL WORKSHOP / TOOLKIT DAY



19 OCTOBER 2026

Designing Human-Centred Online and Blended Learning



Workshop Time:
08:30 – 15:00



Morning Tea:
10:30 – 10:45



Lunch:
12:30 – 13:15



From Conversation to Implementation

Digital learning has moved beyond emergency remote teaching, uploaded notes and recorded lectures. The next challenge for higher education is not whether institutions should use technology, but how digital learning can become more human, engaging, inclusive and effective.

This practical workshop turns the Day 1 Indaba conversations into implementation. Delegates will work through guided activities, templates and institutional reflection to answer one critical question:

“ How do we design digital learning that keeps students connected, supported and successful? ”

Workshop Focus Areas

1

Human-Centred Blended Learning



Delegates will explore what should be online, face-to-face or blended, and how to avoid the 'content dump' approach. The session will focus on designing learning around interaction, feedback, structure, participation and accountability.



Takeaway:
Blended Learning Design Checklist

2

Lecturer Presence and Student Participation



This session focuses on how lecturers can remain visible, responsive and supportive in online learning spaces. Delegates will consider how feedback, short videos, discussion forums, live sessions and peer interaction can make students feel guided and connected.



Takeaway:
Online Student Engagement Planner

3

Assessment Redesign in the Age of AI



Delegates will examine how AI is disrupting traditional assessments and why institutions must redesign assessment rather than only focus on detection and cheating. The focus will be on assessments that test thinking, application, reflection and process.



Takeaway:
AI-Responsive Assessment Redesign Template

4

Learning Analytics and Early Warning Systems



This session helps delegates move beyond LMS logs to identify students who may be quietly disengaging. It will focus on warning signs, meaningful data, student privacy and linking digital insights to academic and student support interventions.



Takeaway:
Student Engagement Early Warning Checklist

5

Digital Learning Student Support Framework



Delegates will explore how online learning should connect with tutoring, counselling, academic advising, disability support and student success services. The session will focus on supporting students before they fall and building clear referral pathways.



Takeaway:
Digital Learning Student Support Framework

6

90-Day Institutional Action Planning



Delegates will consolidate workshop insights into a practical institutional action plan by identifying what must change immediately, who must be involved and how progress will be measured.



Takeaway:
90-Day Human-Centred Digital Learning Action Plan



Workshop Facilitator

Natasha Munsamy
University of the Witwatersrand

Learner | University Teacher | Academic Developer | Instructional Designer | (Ed)Technology Enthusiast | Reimaginer | Writer



Workshop Takeaways

- ✓ A human-centred blended learning model
- ✓ Tools to improve lecturer presence and student participation
- ✓ An AI-responsive assessment redesign template
- ✓ An early warning checklist for disengaged students
- ✓ A digital learning student support framework
- ✓ A 90-day institutional action plan for implementation



Closing Message

Digital learning should not make students feel distant, invisible or unsupported. When designed intentionally, it can strengthen access, connection, participation and success. This workshop gives delegates the tools to make that shift practical.





OFFLINE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2026

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Partner with a high-impact higher education Indaba
shaping the human side of digital learning.

Connect your brand to decision-makers in higher education.



SILVER SPONSOR

ZAR 45 000

- ✓ Logo on conference brochure, website and email campaigns
- ✓ 2 delegate passes
- ✓ Exhibition table / display space
- ✓ Company profile in delegate material
- ✓ Verbal acknowledgement during the event



GOLD SPONSOR

MOST POPULAR

ZAR 70 000

- ✓ All Silver benefits
- ✓ Premium logo placement
- ✓ 3 delegate passes
- ✓ 10-minute speaking opportunity or panel participation
- ✓ Pull-up banner placement at venue
- ✓ Post-event delegate contact list subject to consent



PLATINUM SPONSOR

ZAR 100 000

- ✓ All Gold benefits
- ✓ Lead branding on key conference collateral
- ✓ 4 delegate passes
- ✓ 15-minute thought-leadership address or case-study slot
- ✓ Branded insert or gift in delegate packs
- ✓ Category exclusivity where applicable

WHY SPONSOR?



1. Reach Decision-Makers

Universities, TVET colleges, student support, digital learning, teaching and learning, ICT and government stakeholders.



2. Elevate Brand Visibility

Gain visibility before, during and after the conference.



3. Showcase Solutions

Position your product or service in front of a relevant audience.



4. Build Relationships

Network with education leaders and potential partners.



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The Venue: Where Human Connection Meets Digital Learning

Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside Park

A dedicated venue for Offline Conversations About Online Learning in Higher Education 2026



**Face-to-Face
by Design.
Digital Learning
by Focus.**

All Learning Insights

78%

Engagement Score



Assessment Results



Participation



Virtual Classroom



In a conference about online learning, the venue is not just a location — it is part of the message.

Offline Conversations About Online Learning in Higher Education 2026 is intentionally hosted as a face-to-face Indaba because the future of digital learning cannot be shaped by technology alone. It requires real conversation, shared reflection, debate, networking and human connection.

Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside Park provides an ideal setting for this paradox: a physical gathering space where higher education professionals can step away from screens, sit across from one another, and rethink how online and blended learning can become more human, inclusive and effective.

“

The more digital higher education becomes, the more valuable intentional face-to-face connection becomes.

”



Why This Venue Supports the Indaba

Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside Park is a modern hotel with a central location close to JHB's CBD. It is located near key highways, major highways, and the M1 Motorway, and is only a short drive from Park Station Gautrain.

This makes it suitable for delegates from universities, TVET colleges, government departments, student support units, digital learning teams and academic development offices who need a central Johannesburg meeting point.



1. Face-to-Face Exchange

A setting designed for discussion, participation, networking and peer learning.



2. Central Johannesburg Access

Located near major business routes, with convenient access to key Johannesburg and Sandton business areas.



3. Conference-Ready Spaces

Modern meeting rooms and conference facilities, with spaces accommodating up to 300 people depending on seating layout.



4. Wi-Fi and Business Convenience

Wi-Fi, a business centre, on-site parking, restaurant facilities and other amenities useful for conference delegates.



5. Calm Learning Environment

Gardens, an outdoor pool and a quieter setting offer a welcome contrast to digital fatigue and screen-heavy work.



6. A Venue That Matches the Message

A physical space for delegates to connect, reflect, redesign and implement better digital learning practices.



Accommodation Enquiries

Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside Park



Front Desk / Reservations:
+27 11 640 0400



Email:
info@hijoburgssph.co.za



Address:
Princess of Wales Terrace,
Cnr Canse O' Gowrie &
Sunnyside Drive,
Johannesburg, 2041,
South Africa

Delegates wishing to book accommodation may contact the hotel directly.



Join us in person for the conversation online learning urgently needs.

At Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside Park, delegates will gather not only to discuss technology, but to explore the human relationships, support systems, teaching practices and institutional strategies that make digital learning truly work.



Venue:
Holiday Inn Johannesburg Sunnyside Park



Event:
Offline Conversations About Online Learning in Higher Education 2026



Format:
Face-to-Face Indaba + Practical Workshop

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*A Face-to-Face Indaba on Human Connection, Student Engagement
and the Future of Digital Learning*



DATES:
18–19
October 2026



VENUE:
Holiday Inn
Johannesburg
Sunnyside



FORMAT:
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HOSTED BY:
SkillingsSA

REGISTRATION FEES (VAT INCLUDED)

REGISTRATION OPTION	FEE (VAT INCLUDED)
Full 2-Day Attendance	ZAR 8,999.00
1 Day 1 Only	ZAR 5,999.00
2 Day 2 Workshop Only	ZAR 5,999.00



GROUP OFFER

**REGISTER
5 DELEGATES –
6TH DELEGATE
ATTENDS FREE**



HOW TO REGISTER

Registration can only be confirmed upon receipt of a completed registration form.



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Website:
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WHAT IS INCLUDED



DELEGATE DETAILS (PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK LETTERS)

#	NAME & SURNAME	JOB TITLE	ORGANISATION	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTACT NUMBER
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

REGISTRATION OPTIONS (PLEASE TICK)

- ☐ Face-to-Face Attendance – 2 Days
 ☐ Day 1 Only
 ☐ Day 2 Workshop Only
 ☐ Group Booking
 ☐ Register 5 and the 6th Attends Free

DELEGATE APPROVAL: PLEASE REGISTER ME / US / THEM

Authorised Person: _____ Position: _____ Organisation: _____ VAT Number: _____ Telephone: _____ Email: _____ Signature: _____	Invoice Address: _____ _____ _____ Purchase Order Number (Optional): _____ Date: _____	Company Stamp: _____
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TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Payment due upon registration.
- Early registration is advised due to limited seating.
- Public sector purchase orders accepted.
- Entry may be refused when payment arrangements have not been confirmed.
- Cancellations must be submitted in writing.
- More than 15 working days before event: full credit valid for 12 months.
- Less than 15 working days before event: full registration fee payable.
- Non-attendance constitutes cancellation.
- Programme, speakers and timings may change.
- If cancelled, delegates receive a full credit.
- If postponed, registration transfers automatically.
- The signatory confirms authority to register and accepts personal liability for payment if this is breached.
- By attending, delegates grant permission for photos/videos to be used in SkillingsSA marketing; if concerned, notify us at registration.



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ABOUT US



At **SkillingSA**, we strive to provide the latest research and knowledge on the key issues impacting businesses and organizations in South Africa. Our main focus is to host high quality conferences and seminars, offering unique insights and networking opportunities to professionals across various industries.



Our team of experts is passionate about knowledge sharing and delivering innovative solutions that drive positive change in the business environment.



We are dedicated to creating platforms that bring together top executives, thought leaders, and industry experts to share their knowledge, insights, and experiences.



Get in touch with us today to learn more about our services and how we can support your organization.



HIGH QUALITY
CONFERENCES



VALUABLE NETWORKING
OPPORTUNITIES



INSIGHTS THAT DRIVE
POSITIVE CHANGE