

**PAM@100:  
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

**Re-imagining Public Administration in South Africa and the African continent**

**22 – 24 November 2023**

“Reclaiming Africa’s Intellectual Futures” stands at the forefront of the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration of The University of South Africa (Unisa). Focusing on the future is an essential aspect of any celebration while reflecting on the past. As part of this 150<sup>th</sup> celebration of the University of South Africa, the Department of Public Administration and Management invites you to celebrate another great millstone. 100 years of Public Administration at Unisa. We invite you to reflect on the past of Public Administration, evaluate the current and re-imagine the future. This conference will be hosted in Pretoria, the seat of the South African Executive authority, from 22-24 November 2023.

Public Administration as a subject field became part of Unisa as far back as 1921, as part of the “Study Committee for Classic Literature” that included Public Administration and Political Sciences. A separate Department for the field was established in 1946. During the subsequent years the subject field involved diverse relationships with Political Sciences, such as separate departments but shared interests, one department reflecting the identities of both fields in its name, and one department under the name of Political Sciences. This marriage was dissolved at the end of 1989 resulting in the establishment of a separate Department of Public Administration in 1990. Public Administration lived through the major mergers of higher education institutions in South Africa in the first decade of the new millennium, leading to its renaming to the Department of Public Administration and Management offering a comprehensive qualification mix to students since 2005. Currently, the Department serves no less than 20 242 undergraduate and 2 939 postgraduate students.

The celebratory conference focuses on the theme *re-imagining Public Administration in South-Africa and the African continent*. This theme is set against the historic backdrop of 100 years of Public Administration at Unisa, the current context of Public Administration challenges in Africa and South Africa, and a future perspective on the imperative for meaningful knowledge to deal with these challenges. Hence, the conference theme will be unpacked through the following three subthemes:

- The first subtheme focuses on the question: *What has Public Administration scholarly knowledge contributed over the past 100 years?* This subtheme includes reflections on the meaningfulness of scholarly contributions by African and South



African Public Administration scholars in general, and Unisa scholars in particular, within relevant contexts of time and space. We also invite you to reflect on events that influenced and shaped Public Administration as a subject. This can include but are not limited to reflections on Mount Grace I and II, the democratic process in South Africa as well as on the African content, the Covid-19 pandemic and other relevant historical events.

- The second subtheme focuses on the question: *Does Public Administration adequately prepare students for the world of work within the current context of space and time?* Current practises in Public Administration qualifications, curricula and modes of delivery, are included in this subtheme. Within this subtheme Public Administration scholars could also pay attention to public administration challenges experienced both on the African continent and in South Africa. This theme also invites you to think critically about the following subthemes:
  - **Public Administration Education:** What are current critical aspects that we need to focus on in our curriculum? Does the Sustainable Development Goals form part of Public Administration Education? What different modes of delivery are available to support and promote Public Administration education? How do we include and promote aspects such as language transformation, decoloniality and Africanization as part of our subject?
  - **Standards of Excellence:** How do we determine excellence in public administration education? What standards can be used to determine excellence? Are standards of excellence in Public Administration universal? Are there standards of excellence specific to the African continent? What role does accreditation play in terms of determining excellence in Public Administration education? What vetting processes can be employed to ensure quality Public Administration academics provide quality Public Administration education?
  - **Public Administration Research:** It is only through quality research and scholarship that the subject Public Administration will be able to grow and develop. However, we need to be critical of our research and publications and evaluate their impact on our subject and the practice of public administration. What are current trends in Public Administration research? What is the impact of research in public administration?
  - **Engaged scholarship:** What is the impact of our tuition on the communities we serve? How does our scholarship relate to the needs and expectations of communities at the local government sphere of the developing South Africa? How can engaged scholarship be promoted in Public Administration education?
  - **The Practice of Public Administration:** What is required by the Public Service of Public Administration graduates as well as departments of Public Administration at different universities? What skills and knowledge are required by Public Administration graduates in a fast changing and complex public sector?
  - **The role of Professional Organizations:** What role does professional organisations play in promoting Public Administration and how can this role



perhaps be re-evaluated? What support could professional organisations provide Public Administration graduates?

- **Student perspectives on Public Administration:** What is the perspective and experience of Public Administration students with regard to their studies, curriculum, knowledge and skills gained as well as opportunities after graduating?
- The third subtheme ask the question: *What does the future hold for Public Administration?* This subtheme departs from the imperative of reflecting on the past while thinking about the future. As we move forward, what should be the focus of universities and departments of Public Administration in ensuring that the needs of the South African public sector and society in general are addressed and achieved? What aspects should be included in Public Administration curricula for future generations to ensure local- and international relevance? Which teaching methods will form the basis of future Public Administration education and training in a complex, challenging and fast changing world? More importantly, what should Public Administration scholars consider relevant in their endeavour to ensure a curriculum that is relevant and of quality for the next 100 years?

#### CALL FOR ABSTRACTS/FULL PAPERS:

When submitting an abstract, authors are requested to follow the proposed structure:

- Name, surname, institution, contact details
- Sub-theme
- Topic
- Purpose of the envisaged paper
- Design/methodology/approach applied
- Main findings
- Practical implications
- Originality/value

**ABSTRACT – Length: 500 words**

**FULL PAPER – Length: 3 000 words**

#### SUBMIT ABSTRACTS BY E-MAIL TO:

Prof LC van Jaarsveldt at: [vjaarl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:vjaarl@unisa.ac.za) /

Dr P Raseala at: [raseaps@unisa.ac.za](mailto:raseaps@unisa.ac.za)

**Take Note of the conference publication:** Full papers can be submitted for consideration and publication in a book based on the conference theme. Planned publication by Unisa Press will be during 2024. Information about the book can be obtained from Prof JS Wessels at:

[wessejs@unisa.ac.za](mailto:wessejs@unisa.ac.za)

#### IMPORTANT DATES:

Call for abstracts opens:	<b>25 June</b>
Closing date to submit abstracts:	<b>25 September</b>
Notification of abstract acceptance:	<b>15 October</b>
Closing date to submit full papers:	<b>20 November</b>
Registration opens:	<b>1 July</b>
Conference registration closes:	<b>20 November</b>
Registration before 31 October:	<b>R2 500.00</b>
Registration after 1 November:	<b>R4 000.00</b>
Registered students:	<b>R1 500.00</b>
Pensioners:	<b>R1 500.00</b>



**REGISTRATION LINK:**[HTTPS://FORMS.OFFICE.COM/R/ARDTN9UGAA](https://forms.office.com/R/ARDTN9UGAA)For assistance with registrations please contact Ms M Nemukondeni at: [nemukmg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:nemukmg@unisa.ac.za)**CONFERENCE VENUE:**

The conference will be hosted at:

Ivory Manor

280 Jochem St, Rietvalleirand, Pretoria

Website: <https://www.ivorymanor.co.za/>**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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