



UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE
IYUNIVESITHI yaseNT'SHONA KOLONI
UNIVERSITEIT van WES-KAAPLAND

Navigating Change in Academic Administration

"Human-Centered AI at the University of the Western Cape (UWC)"

Presented by: Nomampondomise Makengo

Administrative Officer
University of the Western Cape



Overview: Navigating Change at UWC

AI in Higher Education

Universities globally are adopting AI to automate administration, support planning, and improve decision-making.

Ethical & Professional Challenges

Algorithmic bias, academic integrity, data privacy, the digital divide, and accountability concerns.

Human-Centered Governance

UWC emphasises Ubuntu values — interconnectedness, dignity, and collective responsibility — over algorithmic efficiency.

UWC's Response

AI literacy initiatives, assessment redesign, GAIDeT disclosure framework, and institutional governance policies.

Key Message: AI should support human expertise — not replace it.

The South African Higher Education Context

South African Higher Education Faces:

Historical Educational Inequality

Unequal Digital Access

Varying Levels of AI Literacy

Financial Constraints

Unequal Access to Technology

Core Tension

Innovation vs Inequality

AI promises efficiency and innovation — but without deliberate intervention, it risks deepening existing inequalities in the South African context.

Key Question

Can AI improve higher education without widening existing inequalities?

Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

What is AI?

Computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence — problem-solving, pattern recognition, language processing, predictive analysis, and decision-making.

UWC & Digital Transformation

- ▶ Predictive Analytics for at-risk students
- ▶ AI-supported Learning Systems
- ▶ Administrative Automation
- ▶ Institutional Research & Planning
- ▶ Assessment Redesign
- ▶ AI Literacy Initiatives & Governance Frameworks

Common University AI Applications

Admissions & Recruitment

Automated Communication

Grading Assistance

Academic Advising

Scheduling & Timetabling

Predictive Student Success

Learning Analytics

Plagiarism Detection

Institutional Research

Transformation of Academic Administration

Traditional Administration

- Professional judgment & experience
- Contextual understanding of student needs
- Human interaction & relationship-building
- Institutional experience & discretion
- Manual processing & communication

AI-Driven Administration

- Automated scheduling systems
- Student communication chatbots
- Predictive student support systems
- Automated assessment processing
- Data management & institutional reporting

Emerging Tension: Efficiency vs Human-Centered Support — AI may fail to account for student complexities (financial hardship, mental health, family circumstances) that experienced administrators recognise.

Ethical Concerns & Risks of AI Integration

Algorithmic Bias

AI trained on historical data may reinforce inequalities — e.g. unfairly profiling students from disadvantaged backgrounds as "at-risk".

Academic Integrity

Generative AI can produce sophisticated content that evades plagiarism detection, undermining independent intellectual development.

Data Privacy & POPIA

Sensitive personal data uploaded to public AI platforms risks confidentiality breaches and legal non-compliance under South African law.

The Digital Divide

Unequal access to AI tools and internet connectivity risks widening existing inequalities in South African higher education.

Accountability

When AI causes harmful outcomes, responsibility is unclear: institution, software developer, or the implementing administrator? Governance must resolve this.

UWC's Human-Centered Philosophy

Ubuntu Philosophy: Prioritising interconnectedness, dignity, and collective responsibility over raw algorithmic efficiency.

01

Augment, Not Replace

AI should enhance human capabilities — not substitute for empathy, contextual understanding, and meaningful engagement.

02

Humans in the Loop

Ensuring critical administrative and academic decisions always involve human oversight, given emotional complexity and cultural diversity.

03

AI Literacy Programs

Empowering staff and students to critically evaluate AI outputs rather than accepting them as objective truth.

04

Fairness & Dignity

Technological advancement must not come at the expense of fairness, accountability, or human dignity — especially in SA's unequal context.

UWC AI Guidelines & GAIDeT Disclosure Model

To protect integrity, UWC implements the Generative AI Disclosure and Transparency (GAIDeT) framework:

Requirement	Standard for Students
Tool Identification	Specify which AI tool (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude) was used and why it was selected for the task.
Purpose of Use	Clarify if used for brainstorming, editing, translation, data analysis, or another purpose.
Prompt Disclosure	Provide documentation of the specific prompts submitted to the AI system.
Verification	Demonstrate how AI-generated facts and references were cross-checked against credible sources.
Prohibited: Presenting AI content as original work · Fabricating references or data using AI · Using AI without lecturer approval · Failure to disclose AI usage = academic misconduct	

Assessment Redesign in the AI Era

Comparative Analysis

Law Faculty

Students compare AI-generated legal reasoning with actual court judgments, identifying inaccuracies, hallucinated precedents, and flawed reasoning.

Process-Based Assessment

Multiple
Departments

Outlines, annotated bibliographies, draft submissions, and reflective process explanations — making purely AI-generated work much harder to disguise.

Oral Assessments & Vivas

Various
Faculties

Oral examinations verify genuine understanding of submitted work, testing whether students can engage critically with their own arguments.

AI Critique Assignments

Health &
Pharmacy

Students use AI for preliminary analysis, then critically evaluate its reliability, ethical implications, and potential biases in their field.

Staff Impact & Institutional Governance

Staff Concerns

- Reduced professional autonomy
- Diminished reliance on human judgment
- Exclusion from institutional decision-making
- Potential displacement of administrative roles
- Pressure to develop digital competences without adequate support
- Rapid change contributing to resistance & insecurity

UWC Governance Framework

- Faculty-specific AI protocols
- Plagiarism & disciplinary policies updated
- GAIDeT AI disclosure requirements
- Data protection & POPIA compliance
- Ethical oversight structures
- Staff training & meaningful consultation
- Student rights & institutional accountability

Staff should not simply adapt to AI — they should actively shape institutional AI governance, ethics, and implementation.

Reflection Questions

Q1 How many of us already use AI in our administrative work — and how aware are we of its limitations?

Q2 Can universities remain genuinely human-centered in increasingly automated environments?

Q3 Does AI integration improve or weaken professional judgment over time?

Q4 How do we balance institutional efficiency with empathy and contextual understanding?

Q5 Can AI ever fully replace the contextual human understanding that academic administration requires?

Conclusion



AI is reshaping academic administration at UWC — embedding itself into student support, assessment, research, and governance systems.



Significant ethical concerns remain: algorithmic bias, academic integrity, data privacy, the digital divide, and accountability gaps must all be addressed.



UWC's Ubuntu-grounded, human-centered approach shows that responsible AI governance is achievable — and essential in the South African context.



Assessment redesign, GAIDeT disclosure practices, and staff participation are practical steps toward ethical AI integration.

AI should function as a supportive tool that strengthens institutional capacity while preserving fairness, dignity, empathy, and accountability.



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Thank You

Questions?

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