AUSTRALIA AFRICA UNIVERSITIES NETWORK (AAUN) Africa Forum 2025

Concept Note and Program

Theme: Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education

Hosted by the University of Rwanda (UR)

Venue: Kigali Conference and Exhibition Village (KCEV), Kigali, Rwanda
Date: 22-24 May 2025

Concept Note: Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education

1. Introduction

In this ever-evolving digital era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a tangible reality that is revolutionizing various aspects of daily life, including inter alia education, health, food security, gender research and geopolitics. In the field of higher education, AI is playing a fundamental role in transforming the way students learn and prepare for the future.

It is in this context that the 2025 Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) Africa Forum is centered on the theme **"Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education"**, reflecting the increasing role of AI in transforming university education, research, and innovation. The forum will bring together academics, policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers to explore how AI can drive sustainable development, enhance education systems, and address global and regional challenges.

The AAUN serves as a strategic platform that fosters collaboration between African and Australian universities to address shared challenges in education, research, and policy development. The University of Rwanda (UR) has been officially designated to host the AAUN Africa Forum 2025, which will take place during 22-24 May 2025 at the Kigali Conference and Exhibition Village (KCEV) in Kigali, Rwanda.

2. Objectives of the Forum

- Examine the role of AI in reshaping university education, research, and innovation.
- Explore AI's impact on key sectors, including inter alia education, food security, gender research, health and geopolitics.
- Facilitate partnerships between universities, government institutions, and private sector stakeholders.
- Identify policy and ethical considerations in AI adoption across different sectors.

3. Sub-Themes

The AAUN Africa Forum explores the transformative potential of AI in Higher Education, emphasizing its impact on sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation.

3.1 Sustainable Food Systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI for Sustainable Food Security)

AI is revolutionizing agriculture and food security through predictive analytics, automation, and smart technologies. AI-driven innovations enhance food production by optimizing resource allocation, improving supply chain efficiency, and mitigating the effects of climate change. Data analytics support climate-smart agriculture by monitoring soil health, predicting weather patterns, and ensuring efficient food distribution. Precision farming, powered by AI, enables real-time monitoring and automated resource management, reducing waste and increasing sustainability. These advancements demonstrate how AI in higher education can equip researchers and students with the skills needed to address global food security challenges.

3.2 Gendered Research and Artificial Intelligence (Inclusive Research AI)

AI's application in gender research presents both opportunities and challenges. Addressing gender biases in AI algorithms is critical to ensuring fairness and inclusivity in education, employment, and research. AI can play a transformative role in promoting gender-equitable education and workforce participation by identifying gaps and recommending targeted interventions. Ethical considerations in AI-driven gender research and policymaking must be prioritized to prevent reinforcing existing inequalities. By integrating AI into higher education, institutions can promote gender-inclusive research and cultivate a new generation of AI professionals committed to fairness and equity.

3.3 Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Health Systems (AI for Sustainable Health Systems)

AI is reshaping healthcare by providing innovative solutions for diagnostics, treatment, and public health management. AI-driven predictive analytics enable early disease detection and personalized treatment plans, improving healthcare outcomes. AI applications in disease surveillance and outbreak management strengthen public health responses, particularly in resource-limited settings. However, the adoption of AI in healthcare must consider ethical, regulatory, and data privacy concerns to protect patient rights and ensure trust in AI-driven medical interventions. By integrating AI into higher education, future healthcare professionals and researchers can leverage AI tools to build resilient and sustainable health systems.

3.4 AI as a Geopolitical Tool: National Policies, Security, and Ethical Considerations

AI has become a critical element of national security and geopolitical strategies. Countries are increasingly integrating AI into cybersecurity, governance, and national development planning. AI enhances national security frameworks through its applications in surveillance, threat detection, and intelligence gathering. However, ethical concerns related to AI in governance, data privacy, and misinformation require well-defined regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible AI use in geopolitical contexts. By embedding AI policy and ethics within higher education curricula, universities can train the next generation of leaders to navigate AI's role in geopolitics and national security.

3.5 Revolutionizing the Way of Learning Using AI

AI is transforming Higher Education by personalizing learning experiences, improving access to resources, and automating assessment processes. AI-driven systems provide automated feedback, enabling students to receive real-time performance evaluations that enhance their learning. Access to digital resources is expanded through AI-powered search tools and smart learning platforms, ensuring students and educators benefit from dynamic, data-driven content. Personalized learning ensures that students receive tailored instruction, catering to their unique learning needs, while AI-facilitated smart content creation enhances the quality and accessibility of educational materials. By leveraging AI in higher education, institutions can create more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environments for students worldwide.

4. Expected Outcomes

The AAUN Africa Forum is expected to generate insights and partnerships that will drive AI understanding and adoption in Higher Education and beyond. Strengthened collaboration between Australian and African universities will facilitate joint research initiatives on AI-driven innovations, enabling cross-continental knowledge exchange. Policy recommendations will guide the integration of AI into Higher Education, research, and national development strategies, ensuring AI is applied ethically and effectively. Additionally, capacity-building initiatives will be identified to equip the next generation of AI experts in Africa and Australia with essential skills and knowledge. Enhanced partnerships between academia, industry, and government will ensure that AI is harnessed responsibly and effectively for sustainable development.

5. Conclusion

The AAUN Africa Forum 2025 presents a unique opportunity to shape the future of AI in Higher Education and its broader societal applications. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and strategic partnerships, this forum will contribute to harnessing AI's potential for sustainable development. The University of Rwanda looks forward to welcoming participants from across the world to Kigali to engage in impactful discussions and collaborations.

PROGRAM: AAUN AFRICA FORUM 2025

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Thursday, 22 May 2025
Kigali Convention and Exhibition Village (KCEV)</td></tr>
<tr><td>1630-1745</td><td>Africa Steering Group Meeting
Venue: Board Room-UR New Headquarters (5th Floor) KN 75 Street</td></tr>
<tr><td>1800-2000</td><td>Africa Forum Welcome Cocktail
Venue: UR New Headquarters (Terrace 2nd Floor) KN 75 Street
Facilitator: Dr Raymond Ndikumana, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Strategic Planning and Administration, University of Rwanda
Africa welcome: Prof Aldo Stroebel (University of Mpumalanga), Co-Chair AAUN Africa
Australia welcome: A/Prof Janet Dzator (University of Newcastle), Deputy Co-Chair AAUN Australia</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Friday, 23 May 2025
Kigali Convention and Exhibition Village (KCEV)-Akagera Tent
Theme: Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education</td></tr>
<tr><td>0800-0900</td><td>Arrival and Registration
Facilitators: Djamali Nambajimana; Ange Uwanyiligira</td></tr>
<tr><td>0900-0940</td><td>Opening Remarks
Session Chair: Prof Richard Musabe, Dean, School of ICT, University of Rwanda
1. A/Prof Kayihura Muganga Didas, Vice-Chancellor, University of Rwanda
2. Prof Aldo Stroebel, DVC Research, Innovation, and Internationalization, University of Mpumalanga, Co-Chair (Africa) AAUN
3. A/Prof David Mickler, Dean Global, Africa, Curtin University, Co-Chair (Australia) AAUN
4. H.E. Jenny Da Rin, Australian High Commissioner to Kenya
5. The Honorable Dr Joseph Nsengimana, Minister of Education, Republic of Rwanda</td></tr>
<tr><td>0940-1020</td><td>The Role of AI in Higher Education: National and University Strategies
Session Chair: Dr Edward Kadozi, Director General, Higher Education Council-Rwanda
Speaker 1: H.E. Jenny Da Rin, Australian High Commissioner to Kenya
Speaker 2: Amb. Janet Mwawasi Oben, High Commissioner of Kenya to Rwanda
Speaker 3: Amb. Margaret Kedisi, Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Head of Mission of Uganda to Rwanda
Speaker 4: Prof Harlene Hayne, Vice-Chancellor, Curtin University</td></tr>
<tr><td>1020-1100</td><td>Plenary Session: The Science of AI in Australia and Africa: Comparative Outlook
Session Chair: A/Prof Dr Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Mauritius
Speaker 1: Prof Gordon O'Brien, Senior Fellow in Water, Gulbali Institute, Charles Sturt University
Speaker 2: Prof Damian Hanyurwimfura, Acting Director, Centre of Excellence in the Internet of Things, University of Rwanda
Discussant: Dr Charles Lebon Mbere Kimpolo, Director, Africa Institute for Mathematics Science(AIMS), industry initiative and Next Einstein Forum</td></tr>
<tr><td>1100-1130</td><td>Coffee Break - Venue: Akagera Tent</td></tr>
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1130-1300	**Parallel Sessions**	
	A. Sustainable Food Systems and AI **Venue:** UR HQ Smart Classroom 1 (1st Floor) **Session Chair:** Prof Richard Tabulawa, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, University of Botswana **Speaker 1:** Prof Alfred Bizoza, Professor in Agricultural Economics, University of Rwanda **Speaker 2:** Prof Kadambot Siddique, Director, Institute of Agriculture, University of Western Australia **Speaker 3:** Dr Sussy Munialo, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Pretoria **Discussant:** Dr Selom Yaotse Dorvlo, Senior Lecturer, University of Ghana	**B. Gendered Research and AI** **Venue:** UR HQ Smart Classroom 2 (1st Floor) **Session Chair:** A/Prof Annemarie Kagwesagye, College of Arts and Social Sciences-University of Rwanda **Speaker 1:** Dr Robert Hans, Tshwane University of Technology **Speaker 2:** A/Prof Janet Dzator, University of Newcastle **Speaker 3:** Ms Enatha Mukantwari, PhD Student, University of Rwanda **Discussant:** Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu, Dean, Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria
1300-1400	**Lunch Break - Venue: Serena Hotel**	
1400-1500	**C. AI and Sustainable Health Systems** **Venue:** Akagera Tent **Session Chair**: Dr Higemengist Astatkie Gebrie, Director, Research Affairs, Early Career Researcher, and Coordinator in AAUN, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia **Speaker 1:** Prof Madeleine Mukeshimana, Professor of Nursing, University of Rwanda **Speaker 2:** A/Prof Kefyalew Alene, School of Population Health, Curtin University (*virtual*) **Discussant:** Prof Martin Ntawubizi, University of Rwanda	
1500-1600	**D. AI as a Geopolitical Tool (national policies, security and ethical considerations)** **Session Chair:** Prof Mohamed Muse Jibrill, President, Amoud University **Speaker 1:** Prof Chris Isike, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria **Speaker 2:** A/Prof Andrew Dansie, Academic Lead, Humanitarian Engineering, University of New South Wales **Discussant:** A/Prof Ignace Gatare, Principal, UR College of Science and Technology	
1600-1630	**Summary of Sessions** **Venue: Akagera Tent** **Session Chair:** Prof Aldo Stroebel (University of Mpumalanga), Co-Chair-AAUN **Presenter 1:** Prof Richard Tabulawa, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, University of Botswana **Presenter 2:** Prof Annemarie Kagwesagye, University of Rwanda **Presenter 3:** Dr Higemengist Astatkie Gebrie, Bahir Dar University **Presenter 4:** Prof Mohamed Muse Jibrill, Amoud University	
1800-2000	**Gala Dinner Venue: Serena Hotel** **Program Director:** Dr Muleefu Alphonse, Principal, UR-College of Arts and Social Sciences **Remarks** - A/Prof David Mickler and Prof Aldo Stroebel, AAUN Co-Chairs - Tribute to the Late Prof John Hearn, AAUN Founding Co-Chair - Annual AAUN John Hearn-Cheryl de la Rey Early Career Researcher Prize - Book project *Australia-Africa Science Diplomacy*: *Collaborative Research, Policy Impact and International Cooperation*	

	- AAUN Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program **Remarks** - Appreciation of University of Rwanda as AAUN Forum Hosts**,** Prof Xiaotian Zhang, DVC Global, Curtin University (Institutional Co-Chair, Australia) **Conclusion**: A/Prof Kayihura Muganga Didas, Vice-Chancellor, University of Rwanda
**Saturday, 24 May 2025** **Kigali Convention and Exhibition Village (KCEV)-Akagera Tent**	
0830-0900	Arrival and registration
0900-1000	**Keynote Address** *A New Agenda for African Languages x AI: Impact of AI on Higher Education* Prof Vukosi Marivati, ABSA-UP Chair in Data Science and AI, University of Pretoria **Facilitated Discussion:** Dr Raymond Ndikumana, DVC-Strategic Planning and Administration
1000-1100	**E. Revolutionizing the Way of Learning Using AI** **Session Chair:** Prof Aminata Niang, Vice-Chancellor, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Senegal **Speaker 1:** Prof Kanayo Oguijuba, School of Development Studies, University of Mpumalanga **Speaker 2:** Mr Sam Cholayil, Curtin University **Discussant:** A/Prof Samuel Mutarindwa, Department of Business information Technology, University of Rwanda
1100-1130	**Coffee Break - Venue: Akagera Tent**
1130-1230	**Closing Plenary** **Session Chair:** Dr Priscilla Mensah, Nelson Mandela University **Summary of Key Messages:** Christine Ingabire, UR College of Arts and Social Sciences **Report by the AAUN ECR Network:** Dr Josh Matanzima, AAUN Australia ECR Co-Chair (*virtual*), University of Queensland and Dr Qinisani Qwabe, AAUN Africa Co-Chair, Nelson Mandela University **AAUN Business:** A/Prof David Mickler, AAUN Co-Chair; Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, AAUN Deputy Co-Chair - PRDF 2025 Round - AAUN Strategic Planning to 2030 - AAUN Australia Forum and AGM, Perth, 1-2 September 2025 **Closing Remarks** Prof Barnabas Nawangwe (Vice-Chancellor, Makerere University), Deputy Co-Chair AAUN Africa Mrs Françoise Kayitare Tengera, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Finance, University of Rwanda
1230-1400	**Lunch Venue - Venue: Serena Hotel**
1400-1600	Visit to the Kigali Genocide Memorial (KGM)