

CALL FOR PAPERS

25<sup>th</sup>

*Annual Conference*

of the South African Association of Public Administration  
and Management (SAAPAM)

Date: 27 September – 03 October 2026

Venue: Nkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention  
Centre Complex, ICC Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Conference Theme

Growth and Sustainability through Improved Governance: Reimagining Institutions,  
Leadership and Development in a Changing World

JOINTLY HOSTED BY:



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TOURISM: FILM  
KwaZulu-Natal  
KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau



# CONFERENCE BACKGROUND & *Rationale*

Since the 2008 global financial crisis, and more recently following the COVID-19 pandemic, countries across the world have increasingly focused on strengthening governance systems as a pathway towards sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Governance is widely recognised as a critical enabler for achieving long-term development objectives. Despite this recognition, many countries continue to face persistent governance challenges, including weak institutions, political instability, deficits in trust and accountability, and inadequate service delivery.

These challenges highlight the need for innovative and context-sensitive governance models, including robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that promote transparency, resilience, inclusivity, and accountability. Such reforms are essential for optimising state administration and enhancing development outcomes. Against this backdrop, it is imperative for scholars and practitioners in Public Affairs, Public Administration, Governance, and related disciplines to critically engage with questions of how improved governance can drive growth and sustainability.

Furthermore, onset of a new local government election cycle. This presents a timely opportunity for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to reflect on the state of local government and to reimagine its role as a strategic anchor for growth and sustainability. After more than 25 years of democratic local governance, municipalities have become central to policy debates due to their operation within increasingly complex and rapidly changing political, economic, technological, social, and environmental contexts.

Understanding the micro- and macro-level forces shaping local government is therefore crucial not only for South Africa but also , particularly given global trends that position local government as a catalyst for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

## CONFERENCE INVITATION

Based on the above, the South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM), focusing on institutional governance, economic growth and sustainability, invites academics, researchers, policymakers, practitioners and postgraduate students to submit abstracts and papers for its **25th Annual Conference**, organised under the theme:

**“Growth and Sustainability through Improved Governance: Reimagining Institutions, Leadership and Development in a Changing World.”**

To operationalise this broad theme, conference discussions will be structured around the following sub-themes

# CONFERENCE

*Sub-Themes*

## Theme 1: Governance, Institutions and Effective Leadership

- Decolonising governance theory and practice
- Optimising governance structures and institutional performance
- Leadership, ethics and accountability in governance
- Professionalisation of public sector institutions
- Trust and accountability deficits in public institutions
- Relevance and shortcomings of existing governance frameworks

## Theme 2: Local Government, Democracy and Political Dynamics

- Coalition formation and breakdown in local councils
- Local government elections and democratic consolidation
- Review of the White Paper on Local Government: lessons and future directions
- Intergovernmental relations and cooperative governance in the era of coalitions
- Political-administrative interface in municipalities beyond cadre deployment

## Theme 3: Development Planning, Service Delivery and Sustainability in Urban and Rural Contexts

- Planning and service delivery coordination in differentiated urban-rural contexts.
- Role of traditional leadership, communal land and local institutions in development planning and regional economic development
- Monitoring and evaluation of development interventions
- Financial distress, fiscal governance and sustainability
- Spatial planning urban development and socio-economic transformation

## Theme 4: Economic Growth, Innovation and Regional Development

- Role and performance of Special Economic Zones (SEZs)
- Local economic development and inclusive growth strategies
- Infrastructure development and sustainability
- Rethinking public–private partnerships to accelerate delivery
- Municipalities strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change.

## Theme 5: International Relations, Global Governance and Decolonial Development

- Decolonising international relations and global governance
- Role of multilateral and regional governance institutions
- Global South, BRICS North-South Cooperation and international dimensions of governance
- Public administration and service post-aid and donor dependence
- Diplomacy, governance and development linkages
- Comparative governance and decolonial public administration

## Theme 6: Higher Education Governance, Decolonisation and Transformation

- Decolonising higher education governance and leadership
- Curriculum transformation and African epistemologies and innovation frontiers
- Are universities preparing ‘future-fit’ public servants?
- Reimagining the role of universities in skills development and economic growth in the era of hyper-specialisation
- Promoting innovation through university–government–industry collaboration
- Academic freedom, institutional autonomy and accountability
- Digital transformation and innovation in higher education

## Theme 7: Digital, Smart and Future Governance

- Digital governance and smart city governance
- E-governance, artificial intelligence and public sector innovation
- Data-driven decision-making and performance management
- Governance responses to global shocks (pandemics, climate change, economic crises)
- Innovation, resilience and future-ready governance systems

# TYPES OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The conference will consider the following types of contributions:

## 1. Panel Discussions

- Panel sessions will provide a platform for groups of scholars, researchers and thought leaders in Public Administration, Development Economics, Public Science, Technology, Governance and related Social Science disciplines to engage critically with the conference theme. Panels will allow for in-depth interrogation of ideas, theoretical perspectives and empirical findings. All inputs must be empirical.

## 2. Individual Paper Submissions

- Individual submissions may include full research papers (journal or book-length), working papers, thesis results chapters or extended policy briefs aligned with any of the conference sub-themes.

## 3. Pre-Conference Workshops

- A range of pre-conference workshops will be organised, including drafting policy briefs, drafting evidence-based Op-Eds, preparing journal papers and book chapters, as well as a postgraduate coaching workshop on media engagement.

# PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

## Journal of Public Administration (JOPA) – Conference Edition

Completed papers that comply with the editorial guidelines of the *Journal of Public Administration* will be subjected to a triple-blind peer-review process. Final publication decisions rest with the Editors following the review process. Only papers submitted by the stipulated deadlines will be considered.

## SAAPAM Book Series

Selected papers that meet editorial requirements will also be considered for inclusion in a series of edited books. Three volumes are anticipated, with lead editors from each of the three partner universities. Publishing houses to be used are Palgrave MacMillan, UNISA Press, University of Johannesburg Press – all in partnership with SAAPAM. These have exceptionally lofty standards so only top papers will be considered for inclusion in these editions.

## Postgraduate Seminar

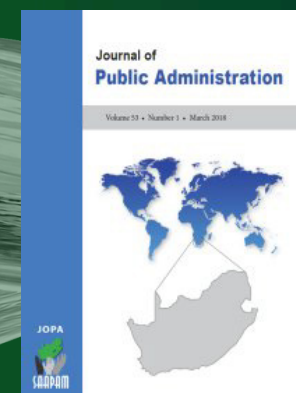
The conference will commence with a dedicated postgraduate seminar for Master's and Doctoral students. An experienced facilitator will guide discussions on key issues in postgraduate research within Public Affairs, Development Economics, Political Science.

## International Guests

Scholars and practitioners from leading think tanks and institutions from the Global South and the Global North will be invited to present lectures or lead roundtable discussions.

## Abstract and Paper Submission

- Abstract length: 250–350 words
- Abstract submission deadline: 3 April 2026
- Full paper submission deadline: 31 May 2026



# SUBMISSION

PORTAL

**Abstracts and Papers:** <https://jopa.wemasoft.co.za/public/portal/events/submit-abstract>

**Registration:** <http://jopa.wemasoft.co.za/public/portal/events/register>

## Important Dates

- Abstract submission deadline: 3 April 2026
- Notification of acceptance: 8 April 2026
- Full paper submission: 31 May 2026
- Final registration payment: 1 July 2026
- Late registration payment: 31 July 2026
- Conference dates: 27 September–2 October 2026

## Conference Fees

- R8,000 – SAAPAM members
- R9,000 – Non-members
- R6,000 – Students (proof of 2026 registration required)

Conference fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. Accommodation is excluded and remains the responsibility of delegates.

## Payment Details

Bank: Standard Bank

Account Holder: SAAPAM

Account Number: 012580015

Branch Code: 01-15-45-15

Proof of payment should be emailed to: [SAAPAM@tut.ac.za](mailto:SAAPAM@tut.ac.za) and [molepojn@tut.ac.za](mailto:molepojn@tut.ac.za) (Attention: Prof John Molepo)

The Gala Dinner will be held on 1 October 2026.

# ACCOMMODATION

SAAPAM has negotiated discounted accommodation rates with selected hotels. Delegates are requested to use the discount code **SAAPAM25** when making bookings. A shuttle service will be available between the hotels and the ICC.

## HILTON DURBAN

Room Type	Price
Twin Standard Room Bed and Breakfast	R1950-00
King Standard Room Bed and Breakfast	R2150-00
King Deluxe Bed and Breakfast	R2350-00

Contact Details  
Carmel.daniels@hilton.com  
031 880 8100

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## BALMORAL HOTEL

Room Type	Price
Standard Room Dinner, Bed and Breakfast	R1950-00

### Contact Details

[Sales@balmoralhotel.co.za](mailto:Sales@balmoralhotel.co.za)

[Res@balmoralhotel.co.za](mailto:Res@balmoralhotel.co.za)

031 368 8220

061 258 9534

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## SOUTHERN SUN HOTELS

Garden Court South Beach	
Room Type	Price
Standard Room Dinner, Bed and Breakfast	R1630-00
Garden Court Marine Parade	
Room Type	Price
Standard Room Dinner, Bed and Breakfast	R1630-00
The Edward Hotel	
Room Type	Price
Standard Room Dinner, Bed and Breakfast	R1730-00
Southern Sun Elangeni Maharani	
Room Type	Price
Standard Room Dinner, Bed and Breakfast	R1845-00

Contact Details

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# CONFERENCE

ORGANISER

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