

# DESIGN+ Disruptions, Realities, Futures

2025 Design Education Forum of Southern Africa Conference 18 -19 September

## Call for Abstracts

The 2025 DEFSA conference, DESIGN+ Disruptions, Realities, Futures, explores the dynamic intersections of design, education, technology, culture, and social change, addressing the tensions and synergies between the physical and digital realms. This hybrid conference hosted by Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa, celebrates design as a powerful tool for innovation, cultural preservation, and societal transformation. Through a dialogical and participatory approach and by posing open-ended questions, the 2025 DEFSA conference aims to highlight transformative collaboration and multidisciplinary perspectives while integrating Afrikan-centred and global insights into design education and practice for societal impact.

The 2025 DEFSA conference theme, *Design+ Disruptions, Realities, Futures*, is open to interpretation and further guided by the following subthemes.

### Conference subthemes:

#### Design+ *Digital Disruptions and Technology Integration*

- What opportunities for innovation could be developed through a deeper understanding of AI and its impact on design processes?
- How are we bridging the industry and design education gap in the tech-driven era?
- In what ways do we enhance design education through emerging technologies?

#### Design+ *Societal Realities, Impact and Cultural Preservation*

- How could we celebrate Afrikan-centred design and visual arts?
- What could a critical design approach unearth when used to explore societal protest and disruption?
- How do we address cultural pride and preservation of uniqueness in a globalised world?

#### Design+ *Sustainability and Future-Focused Design*

- What are some ways we could integrate sustainability into design education and practices?
- How could we rethink design for evolving global challenges?
- How do we shape impactful futures through innovative human-centred design education?
- How are we designing for engagement through collaborative, dialogical, or multidisciplinary approaches to design education, practice, and community building?



## 2025 DEADLINES

### 20 February

Abstracts uploaded to the DEFSA Member Zone

### 20 March

Notification of the acceptance of abstracts

### 19 June

Full papers uploaded to the DEFSA Member Zone

## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Your abstract should be between 300 and 500 words. The abstract should be a concise statement of the problem, approach, results, and conclusions of the work and clearly state the paper's contribution to the field. Include three to five keywords with your submission. All references to the author/s in the abstract body should be removed before submission.

- Abstracts must be submitted **as a PDF** on the [DEFSA Member Zone](#).
- You do not need to have an account or log in to submit your abstract.

**The conference is open to both DEFSA members and non-member academics and institutions.**

- For past conferences, visit the [DEFSA Conference website](#)
- For submissions and author information, visit the [DEFSA Member Zone](#).
- Send your queries via email to [president@defsa.org.za](mailto:president@defsa.org.za)

**Please share this call for abstracts/papers within your networks.**

