



## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

### Knowledge Co-production

SARUA's strategic focus area (SFA) of knowledge co-production emphasises a collaborative, inter- and trans-disciplinary approach in support of mode 2 and mode 3 thinking, i.e., where the knowledge co-production is inclusive by design and of value to society. Targeted specifically at the unique challenges of SADC, this SFA involves diverse stakeholders across the network, including academics, policymakers and community members, to ensure that knowledge generated is regionally relevant and practically applicable. It aims to bridge the gap between theory and real-world needs, fostering capacity building and community engagement. An inclusive approach not only enhances local empowerment but also seeks to influence policy-making, ensuring that the outcomes are beneficial for the region's sustainable development. In 2025, SARUA will build on this foundation with a range of events, workshops and capacity-building initiatives designed to deepen these collaborative efforts and expand the impact across the SADC region.

### Leadership and Professional Development

SARUA is hosting a *Dean and Senior Leadership Programme* which aims to embolden and capacitate leadership in higher education institutions (HEIs) across the SADC region. The programme welcomes participants in leadership positions from the 16 SADC countries and focuses on leadership, management, and navigating the complex challenges of higher education in the African continent. The programme is future-focused, innovative and empowering, equipping leaders to lead towards 'a future we want', premised on Africa's vision and the leadership maturity framework. The Dean and Senior Leadership programme is offered twice per year and participants will not only develop relevant competencies, but also build a supportive network.

### Institutional Quality Management (IQM)

SARUA's strategic focus area on IQM supports the enhancement of internal quality assurance systems within SADC HEIs, focusing on training, capacity building, activities related to the HAQAA3 (Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation) initiative and the TrainIQA programme. These efforts align with SARUA's overarching commitment to educational excellence in the region. The Community of Practice for IQM will continue with its webinar programme with plans for two capacity-building webinars to be held in the period January to June 2025. The partnership between SARUA and the University of Potsdam is ongoing and the TrainIQA training programme for the second cohort of trainees will commence next year. Under the HAQAA3 initiative, the establishment of the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation agency (PAQAA) is gaining momentum and the nomination of a team who will develop the statutes for the agency will be finalised in 2025.

### Digital Transformation

SARUA's Digital Transformation focus aims to integrate digital technologies across higher education in the SADC region. Central to this initiative is a webinar series that will engage participants from the 16 SADC countries and provide insights into the role of digital innovation in higher education. The webinars explore digital innovation in areas like pedagogy, technological infrastructure and institutional readiness, aligning with SARUA's vision for future-oriented education. Additionally, SARUA is spearheading the establishment of a Community of Practice to collaboratively research and develop a digital transformation framework and digital maturity framework, addressing Africa's unique higher education challenges and opportunities and preparing institutions to meet evolving educational demands.

## PROGRAMMES

### Incentives for Conducting Societally Impactful Research

SARUA is leading the project on *Exploring the barriers and incentives for Societally Impactful Research* which is focussed on uniting the SADC region behind an Action Agenda that will promote research that is locally impactful and globally relevant. Together with an expansive Community of Practice, this project researches the factors that accelerate meaningful and impactful research and will culminate in a set of recommendations that promote societally impactful research in the SADC region.

### Dialogue Series for Vice-Chancellors

The SARUA Dialogue Series for vice-chancellors (VCs) across SADC higher education institutions will aim to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and alignment on regional priorities. It could address challenges, share best practices and explore innovative strategies to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education across the region. VCs across HEIs, especially in regions like SADC, often face a complex set of challenges that require balancing academic priorities with administrative, financial and political pressures. The Dialogue Series will address these issues, taking place twice in 2025, and will allow VCs or their representatives to engage on these important issues and share experiences towards building a resilient and innovative SADC higher education system.

