



2026 RAEI WORKSHOP & 19th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Operational Excellence in HR, Rewards, Benefits and Payroll

Empowering People • Enabling Institutions • Driving Service Excellence

THURSDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Programme
08:30 – 09:30	Registration and Networking Registration of delegates, networking and refreshments. Delegates have an opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the Higher Education sector before the commencement of the workshop.
09:30 – 09:45	Workshop Announcements Presenter: Peet du Plessis
09:45 – 09:50	Word of Welcome Welcome by the Chairperson of the RAEI Management Committee, Ms Kaylin Hollenbach.
09:50 – 10:35 Opening Inspirational Keynote Address	<i>Leading Through Change: Building Future-Ready Universities Through Operational Excellence</i> Higher Education is experiencing unprecedented transformation driven by financial constraints, digital disruption, changing workforce expectations and increasing governance demands. This keynote will inspire delegates to rethink the role of HR, Rewards, Benefits and Payroll professionals as strategic partners in institutional success rather than administrative support functions. Key discussion areas: • The future of Higher Education in Southern Africa • Why operational excellence matters now more than ever • Leading through uncertainty and change • Creating exceptional employee experiences • Innovation and digital transformation • Building resilient and future-ready institutions • The strategic contribution of HR, Payroll, Rewards and Benefits professionals Presenter: Mr Meko Magida, Executive Director: Human Resources, UWC
10:35 – 11:30 Session 1: Interactive Workshop	<i>Navigating the Payroll Landscape: Taxation & Statutory Update 2026</i> An interactive technical workshop providing delegates with the latest taxation, payroll and statutory developments affecting Higher Education Institutions. Topics include: • Latest SARS legislative developments • Payroll taxation updates • Recent tax rulings affecting employers • Statutory compliance obligations • Emerging payroll risks • Practical payroll case studies • Interactive question and answer session Facilitator: Mr Dumisa Sihawu, Head of Global Employer Services, BDO Tax Services Note: Delegates are invited to submit taxation and payroll questions up to one week before the workshop.
11:30 – 11:50	Refreshments and networking

11:50 – 12:15	Session 1: Taxation & Statutory Update 2026 - continued
12:15 – 13:05 Session 2: Strategic Presentation	<i>Global Talent, Local Impact: Foreign National Employment in South African Higher Education</i> Exploring how institutions can balance transformation, internationalization, compliance, talent attraction and institutional sustainability while navigating an increasingly complex regulatory environment. Presenter: Dr. Valile M Dwayi, Executive Director of Internationalization at CUT
13:05 – 14:15	Networking Lunch
14:15 – 15:40 Session 3: Facilitated Open-floor discussions	14:15–14:30 — Introduction and framing: 10 minutes The facilitator introduces the purpose of the session, identifies the common challenges facing institutions and explains the expected outcomes. 14:30–14:50 — Statutory compliance and lessons from payroll audits: 20 minutes - Managing statutory compliance risks in Higher Education; and - Lessons learnt from payroll audits. The discussion should focus on recurring audit findings, governance weaknesses, segregation of duties, statutory deadlines, system controls and practical risk-mitigation measures. Discussion leaders: Nelson Mandela University delegation 14:50–15:15 — Remuneration restructuring and increasing benefit costs: 25 minutes - Converting employees from Basic Plus Benefits to a Total Guaranteed Package; and - Managing negative non-pensionable allowances arising from increasing benefit costs. Delegates could explore affordability, employee consultation, communication, pensionability, contractual implications, change management and lessons from institutions that have already undertaken similar conversions. Discussion leaders: NMU delegation 15:15–15:40 — Hybrid work, workforce flexibility and productivity: 20 minutes - Hybrid work and workforce flexibility; and - Productivity in a changing workplace. The discussion should move beyond whether hybrid work should be permitted and instead examine governance, accountability, performance measurement, service-delivery standards and which roles are reasonably suited to flexible work arrangements. Discussion leaders: University of Western Cape delegation
15:40 – 16:00	Refreshments
16:00 – 16:30 Session 3 continued:	16:00–16:20 — Employee wellbeing, future skills and institutional attractiveness: 20 minutes Bring together: - Employee wellbeing and engagement; - Skills for the future; and - Universities as employers of choice. The discussion could examine how universities can build future-ready capabilities, retain scarce skills, support employee wellbeing and strengthen their employee value propositions within constrained financial environments. Discussion leaders: University of Western Cape delegation 16:20–16:30 — Recommendations and close: 10 minutes The facilitators records: - The principal risks and challenges identified; - Practical solutions already being implemented by institutions; - Areas requiring further research or guidance; - Opportunities for collaboration between institutions; and - Recommended topics for future RAEI engagements. Management Committee members and Peet du Plessis
16:30 – 17:20 Session 4:	Team Fun Quiz An interactive team-based quiz. Designed to promote networking, collaboration and knowledge sharing in a fun and engaging environment.

19:00 – 23:00	Networking Dinner An evening of networking, entertainment, music, dancing and celebrating the Higher Education community. Theme: Denim & Dazzle Dress Code: Informal
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FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Programme
07:30 – 08:45	Breakfast and Hotel Check-out
08:45 – 08:55	Conference Announcements and Lucky Draw
08:55 – 09:15	Strategic Partner Presentation Innovation Showcase: Technology Shaping the Future of HR, Payroll and Employee Experience Presentation by a strategic partner demonstrating innovative technologies supporting operational excellence. Presenter: To be confirmed
09:15 – 10:00 Session 5: Strategic Presentation	<i>Reimagining Employee Benefits: Designing a Reward Experience for the Workforce of Tomorrow</i> This session explores how employee benefits are evolving to meet the expectations of a diverse, multigenerational workforce while improving employee wellbeing, engagement and organizational performance. Topics include: • Total Rewards strategy • Flexible benefits • Financial wellbeing • Retirement readiness • Mental health support Presenter: Ms Thiru Govender, Divisional Head: Corporate Consulting Division, Remchannel, Old Mutual.
10:00 – 10:55 Session 6: Legislative Update	<i>Labour Law 2026: Navigating Legal Change with Confidence</i> A practical overview of recent labour law developments affecting Higher Education Institutions. Topics include: • Recent Labour Court judgments • Legislative developments • Managing employment risk • Practical compliance strategies Presenter: Ms Karlien Lourens, Human Resource Business Partner & Litigator, Grok HR Business Solutions
10:55 – 11:15	Refreshments and Networking
11:15 – 12:15 Session 7: Future-Focused Presentation	<i>Beyond Reports: Transforming HR Data into Workforce Intelligence</i> How institutions can leverage data, technology and predictive analytics to improve workforce planning, strategic decision-making and institutional performance through deploying of Artificial Intelligence tools to increase efficiencies. Topics include: • Workforce analytics • HR dashboards • Predictive modelling • Executive decision support • Artificial Intelligence in HR, Rewards, Benefits and Payroll: From Automation to Intelligent Decision-Making • Responsible AI and governance Presenter: Ms Rene Richter, Chief Marketing Officer, Total Rewards Knowledge Hub.
12:15 – 13:00	Session 8: 19th Annual General Meeting of RAEI Chairperson: Ms Kaylin Hollenbach Important Note: Members of RAEI are hereby notified to submit points for the AGM agenda to the Administrator, Mr Peet du Plessis at info@raei.co.za The agenda closes on Monday, 28 September 2026.

13:00 – 13:10	Conference Evaluation and Lucky Draw Delegates are requested to complete the conference evaluation before departure.
13:10 – 14:15	Lunch and Farewell Closing networking opportunity and departure of delegates.