Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities

The Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities (GISU) is pleased to promote or offer our 2026 Digital and Entrepreneurship Academy programs and either other Alliance events or International Conferences in collaboration with our Alliance universities. Digital and Entrepreneurship Academy two-hour online non-credit professional development programs are provided free of charge for the students and faculty of Alliance members and affiliate members, industry representatives, area officials and alumni each Alliance university invites.

Program Registration:

To register for Digital and Entrepreneurship Academy programs, please contact the designated Alliance representative for your university who will provide the necessary ZOOM meeting ID and password required for participation. For further information or to register for either other Alliance events or International Conferences in collaboration with our Alliance, please contact the designated representative noted in the program description.

This listing of programs and events with their dates is subject to modification as might be required. Views expressed in all programs are those of the presenters and they do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the Alliance or its members and affiliate members.

2026 Digital and Entrepreneurship Academy Offerings, Events, Alliance International Conferences or International Conferences in Collaboration with the Alliance

March

- **Strategics for Implementing Low Carbon Concrete (Digital Academy)**
  March 18 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Stable Organic Transport Materials for New-Generation Solar Cells (Digital Academy)**
  March 25 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm (Beijing time)
- **Recent Developments in the Mathematical Sciences and Sustainable Development Goals: Selected Case Studies: An African Perspective (Digital Academy)**
  March 27 from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

April

- **AI Transformation in Professional Services: Reimagining the Future of Audit, Accounting and Advisory in Southeast Asia (Digital Academy)**
  April 8 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Masterclass on Design Thinking (Digital Academy)**
  April 14 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Integrating AI and Physics-Based Methods: Computational Design of the Next Generation of Medicinal Drugs (Digital Academy)**
  April 16 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Digital Marketing for SMMEs (Digital Academy)**
  April 21 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **AI as Start-Up Accelerator: The AI-Augmented Founder (Digital Academy)**
  April 23 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)

May

- **Clean Water for All (Digital Academy)**
  May 12 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Cybersecurity in IR 4.0 (Digital Academy)**
  May 15 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Digital Boundaries and the Employee: Preventing Digital Burnout (Digital Academy)**
  May 19 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Data Mining and Business Forecasting (Digital Academy)**
  May 21 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)

June

- **Tax Policy in Green Future: Socio-Economic Implications for Developing Countries (International Conference)**
  June 10 - 11
- **Re-Engineering Leadership Systems and Institutions for Sustainable Development in Africa (International Conference)**
  June 11 – 13

September

- **Advances in the Development of Nanostructured Electrochemical Devices for the Detection of Oxidative DNA Damage (Digital Academy)**
  September 8 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Financial Inclusion and Digital Tools (Digital Academy)**
  September 15 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age (Digital Academy)**
  September 22 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)

October

- **E-commerce Essentials for Entrepreneurs (Digital Academy)**
  October 6 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Building a Personal Brand Online (Digital Academy)**
  October 13 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Final Competition**
  Date: To Be Announced

November

- **Bi-annual Alliance Council Meeting**
  Date: To Be Announced
- **International Conference on Engineering for a Sustainable World (ICESW 2026)**
  November 23 – 26
- **Optimizing Precision Agriculture Artificial Intelligence (AI) Models for Improved Performance and Broader Applications (Digital Academy)**
  Date: November 26 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
- **Digital Tourism Geographies: Placemaking via Role Playing Video Games (Digital Academy)**
  November 27 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)

Dates To Be Announced

- **International Conference on Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion (International Conference)**
  Date: To Be Announced
- **Agronomic Effects of Field Inoculation with Bacteria Consortia in Wheat Planting (Digital Academy)**
  Date: To Be Announced
- **Abrupt Eco-environmental Changes in Coastal Lagoons Since the Anthropocene and their Ecological Restoration; Earth and Environmental Sciences (Digital Academy)**
  Date: To Be Announced
- **Innovative Monitoring Approaches for Large-Scale Risk Assessment of the Built Environment (Digital Academy)**
  Date: To Be Announced
- **Navigating the Nexus: Understanding the Interplay of Global Warming and Invasive Species on Ecosystems and Economies (Digital Academy)**
  Date: To Be Announced

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

March 18 Strategics for Implementing Low Carbon Concrete

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
March 18 from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing time)
Distinguished Professor Vivian Tam, Program Leader from Western Sydney University

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project which addressed how mixed construction and demolition waste presents one of the major challenges for recyclers to separate them for high-quality recycled material. Discussion will include how brick is the second most widely used construction material after concrete (Amidi & Wang, 2015). Masonry waste is largely composed of broken brick, which may be contaminated with mortar, rendering and plaster. This creates difficulties in sorting and cleaning brick waste before recycling, which results in a relatively low recycling rate. Most countries, including Australia, do not currently allow the use of mixed construction and demolition waste for concrete production if the proportion of brick waste is more than 85% due to its poor performance under the current limited technologies. Researchers around the world have been trying to find ways to recycle brick waste. A Japanese practice is to burn demolished bricks into slime burnt ash, while in Hong Kong, bricks are commonly crushed to form filling materials and hardcore. Crushing brick waste as powder for cement replacement has been used, but its replacement ratio is currently limited to 20% because of its low compressive strength and typically limited to low-grade applications (Bui, Satomi, & Takahashi, 2018).

Distinguished Professor Vivian W. Y. Tam is the Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and a world-leading researcher in the field of construction engineering and management. Her findings have found applications and impact for tackling climate-change issues for green buildings and recycled concrete. She is currently the Director of Centre for Infrastructure Engineering, Associate Dean (Research and HDR), Associate Dean (International) and Discipline Leader (Construction Management) at School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment, Western Sydney University, Australia. She has served as the College of Expert, Australian Research Council, Australian Government in 2018-2021 and currently holds this position again from 2025 onward. She is currently the Editor-in-Chief of International Journal of Construction Management and Senior Editor of Construction and Building Materials. She has published over 330 referred journal articles of which 7 are highly-cited. Her work has been recognised by peers nationally and internationally, which has been exemplified by nine Australian Research Council projects and over 33,000 citations with a h-index of 95. Vivian is also named as 100,000 Top-Scientists (Top 2% Scientists) in the World for since 2017. Vivian is also nominated as a Runner Up, Scopus Researcher of the Year Award 2019, Excellence in Research Impacting a Sustainable Future, Scopus, and her team has won the Gold Award, 2021 Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities (GISU), from this project development.

March 25 Stable Organic Transport Materials for New-Generation Solar Cells

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
March 25 from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing time)
Professor Feng Wang from Linkoping University

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project aimed at further tackling the thermal instability of the hole transport layer and bringing perovskite photovoltaics closer to reality. This research included the optimization of the doping recipe by designing different radicals and organic salts, fabrication of the doped organic films through a spin-coating approach and validation of the developed materials and films by fabricating durable perovskite solar cell devices.

Feng Wang has been an Associate Professor at Linköping University, Sweden since 2023. Previously, he was awarded a VINNMER Fellowship (Sweden, 2017) and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship (European Commission, 2018). He has received funding from the Swedish Research Council, STINT, Formas Network Grant, Olle Engkvists Stiftelse, and Carl Tryggers Stiftelse. His research interests focus on solar energy technologies, including lead-based perovskites, lead-free perovskites, and organic transport materials. Feng Wang has co-authored around 100 peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals, accumulating over 10,000 citations with an h-index of 46. His work has been published in Science, Nature, Nature Photonics, Nature Communications, Science Advances, Advanced Materials, and Angewandte Chemie, etc. Additionally, he is a co-inventor of two licensed patents.

March 27

Recent Developments in the Mathematical Sciences and Sustainable Development Goals: Selected Case Studies: An African Perspective

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
March 27 from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm (Beijing Time)
Professor Sibusiso Moyo, Program Leader, and Professor Karin-Therese Howell from Stellenbosch University

This program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project exploring recent developments in Mathematical Sciences and provide a comprehensive bibliometric analysis as well as the impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. A careful selection of indicators that can be used to measure impact, especially as applied to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) areas will be considered. This is the first part of the study which forms part of a bigger project by the Project Team Members from the Stellenbosch University Department of Mathematical Sciences and AIMS, South Africa. The presentation will include discussion and suggestions.

Professor Sibusiso Moyo holds a PhD in Mathematics from the University of Natal, Durban and a Masters (with distinction) in Tertiary Education Management from the LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne Australia. As a scholar, she has published widely in the Mathematical Sciences with a focus on differential equations and optimization problems in international peer reviewed journals. Her current interests also include Tertiary Education Management, Entrepreneurship and Innovation policies and strategies. Her current position is Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies at Stellenbosch University.

Karin-Therese Howell holds a PhD in Mathematics from the University of the Free State, South Africa. As a scholar, she has published in international peer reviewed journals. Her area of specialization is in abstract algebra, with a focus on structures called near-vector spaces. Her current research interests also include Mathematical Biology, where biological problems are analyzed through an algebraic lens. Karin-Therese is passionate about teaching mathematics and during her time at Stellenbosch University she was awarded fourteen Vice-Rector's Awards for Excellence in First-year Teaching. Her long term goals include contributing to the development of mathematics in Africa, supporting women in mathematics and raising awareness around inclusivity for neurodiversity. Her current position is Director of the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences and Ass. Professor at Stellenbosch University.

April 8

AI Transformation in Professional Services: Reimagining the Future of Audit, Accounting and Advisory in Southeast Asia

Digital Academy
April 8 from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm (Beijing Time)
Mr. Alan Chang from Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology and OA Group of Companies

This program explores how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping professional services — including audit, tax, accounting, corporate governance, and business advisory. Designed for university students, faculty, and early-stage professionals, this program connects strategic insights with real-world applications in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. This program will include multiple follow-up sessions.

Mr. Alan Chang is a Chartered Accountant, scaling entrepreneur, and regional transformation leader with over 20 years of experience across audit, advisory, corporate governance, and digital innovation. He is the Group CEO and Founder of OA Group of Companies — a professional services organization with offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and China — serving a portfolio of SMEs, family businesses, and fast-growing enterprises in the Asia-Pacific region. Alan is the visionary behind Ai.OA, a pioneering initiative leveraging agentic AI to transform traditional workflows in audit, tax, accounting, business advisory, and corporate services. Through this, he bridges the gap between conventional professional practices and the new frontier of intelligent automation. He is a practitioner of the Scaling Up and EOS frameworks, and actively mentors next generation leaders through EO (Entrepreneurs' Organization), ISCA (Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants), and CPA Australia.

April 14

Masterclass on Design Thinking

Digital Academy
April 14 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Faculty from Research Support and Management. FALF/FREF, Nelson Mandela University Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

This interactive masterclass will introduce participants to the principles of Design Thinking. Participants will learn how to empathize with users, ideate innovative solutions, and prototype their ideas which foster creativity essential for entrepreneurship. The session will also explore applied research on design thinking methodologies and their applications in entrepreneurship.

This session will be facilitated by an expert in Design Thinking and applied innovation research with extensive experience in human-centered design, entrepreneurship education, and research commercialization. The speaker brings practical insights into applying design thinking methodologies within academic and entrepreneurial contexts that support innovation-driven problem solving.

April 16

Integrating AI and Physics-Based Methods:Computational Design of the Next Generation of Medicinal Drugs

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
April 16 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Professor Bastieri, Program Leader, from the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Padova University, School of Physics and Electronic Engineer, Guangzhou University, and Professor Zonta, Department of Biosciences and Bioinformatics, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

The 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry underscored a profound shift in the life sciences: artificial intelligence (AI) has made it possible to predict and design complex biomolecular structures directly from sequence data. Tools such as AlphaFold have transformed protein structure prediction from a decades-long grand challenge into a routine computational task. Yet from a physical sciences perspective, structure alone does not define function. Drug efficacy ultimately depends on molecular interactions governed by thermodynamics, dynamics, and statistical mechanics—domains where physics-based modeling remains indispensable.

Looking forward, this convergence of AI, statistical physics, and large-scale computation has the potential to fundamentally reshape how medicines are discovered. As simulations increasingly substitute for early-stage experiments, drug development may become faster, cheaper, and more democratized—lowering barriers for academic labs and enabling more rapid responses to emerging diseases. For physicists and computational scientists, this field offers a compelling opportunity to apply core principles of modeling, simulation, and optimization to problems with direct and far-reaching societal impact.

Denis Bastieri is Professor of Physics at the University of Padova and Distinguished Professor at the Center for Astrophysics at Guangzhou University. He is affiliated with the Centre for Space Research and Activities of the University of Padova, the Centre for Space Philosophy, and the Laboratory for Space Research (LSR) at the University of Hong Kong. He has maintained long-standing academic and scientific collaboration with institutions in China since 2010 and currently serves as Coordinator of the Working Group on Innovation and Technology of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in China. Within this collaboration, he has supervised fourteen PhD students from Guangzhou University at the University of Padova and two PhD students from the University of Padova at Guangzhou University. He also holds the position of Delegate of the Italian Academy of Cuisine in South China.

His research activities are focused on astroparticle physics, space-based detector technologies, and low-power computing systems. He has been recognized by Clarivate Analytics as a Highly Cited Researcher (top 1% worldwide) and was the recipient of the Guangdong Science and Technology Cooperation Award in 2021. He was selected to carry the Olympic torch at the inauguration of the 2025 National Games, representing Guangzhou University.

April 21

Digital Marketing for SMMEs

Digital Academy
April 21 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Faculty from Research Support and Management, FALF/FREF, Nelson Mandela University Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

This program will cover digital marketing strategies tailored for Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). Topics will include social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and content creation to enhance visibility and engagement. Participants will support student-led research prototypes focused on developing innovative digital marketing tools and strategies.

This program will be led by a digital marketing and entrepreneurship specialist with strong experience supporting SMMEs and early-stage ventures. The speakers have expertise in digital branding, social media strategy, SEO, and data-driven marketing with a focus on translating research outputs into practical digital marketing solutions.

April 23

AI as Start-Up Accelerator: The AI-Augmented Founder

Digital Academy
April 23 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Assistant Professor Dr. Chee Wei Loon from the Department of Accountancy and Business, Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology

The landscape of entrepreneurship is undergoing a seismic shift, driven by the democratization of artificial intelligence. This program explores the concept of the "Solopreneur Unicorn"—the prediction that AI infrastructure will enable single-founder entities to reach billion-dollar valuations without traditional headcount scaling. The startup lifecycle will be dissected through the lens of AI augmentation, demonstrating how the "zero-to-one" phase has compressed from months to weeks.

Specifically tailored to the Southeast Asian context, this session highlights how regional founders can leverage Malaysia's mobile-first ecosystem and multicultural advantage. This program will cover practical methodologies for "synthetic" market validation, natural language programming for non-technical founders, and the deployment of AI agents for 24/7 operations and WhatsApp-based commerce. Through local case studies—ranging from Halal-tech to hyper-localized marketing—participants will learn to navigate the specific opportunities and risks of the AI era, moving beyond theoretical hype to actionable implementation.

Dr. Chee obtained his Doctorate degree in Business Administration at University Science Malaysia in 2019. He is currently an Assistant Professor in TAR UMT, Penang branch. His research interests span from green entrepreneurship to employee satisfaction, with particular focus on the SME sector. Dr. Chee is a member of Malaysian Institute of Management (MIM) and a lifetime member of Golden Key Society. He is also a certified trainer of HRD Corp (Human Resource Development Corporation).

May 12

Clean Water for All

Digital Academy
May 12, 2026 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Professor Darren Reynolds, Director of the Centre for Research in Sustainable Agri-Food & Environment from the University of the West of England Bristol

Freshwater is under threat from urbanization, agricultural runoff, industrial waste and climate-driven drought flooding. This program will present collaboration between the University of the West of England Bristol and leading researchers, scientists and engineers who have developed a novel approach, exploring both real-time sensing technology and community-scale water treatment to reimagine freshwater systems.

Monitoring and improving water, sensing and treatment technologies are already being used to monitor and improve freshwater supply in the UK, India and Europe. This team is using sensors with The Rivers Trust to monitor the health of UK rivers. Treatment systems are also actively improving the reliability of drinking water at the Leamna Pneumology Hospital in Romania, an ecovillage in Greece and being used to clean wastewater from a cement factory in Albania.

This program will further explore research that is developing sensor and treatment systems to supply communities with safe clean water. The main goal of this research can directly drive prosperity, healthier people, healthier cities and healthier economies.

Professor Reynolds is a professor in Health and Environment and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Knowledge Exchange at UWE, Bristol. He has a passion for teaching, learning and research and uses research informed teaching to inspire individuals about the power of scientific research to drive change.

May 15

Cybersecurity in IR 4.0

Digital Academy
May 15, 2026 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Assistant Professor Dr. Ang Sau Loong, Department of Computing and Information Technology from Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology

Zero Trust Architecture (ZTA) and AI-driven threat detection have become the backbones of network security, enabling stakeholders to confidently build the interconnected digital landscape and secure critical infrastructure in IR 4.0. The key features of Cybersecurity in IR 4.0 include real-time threat intelligence, proactive vulnerability management, and the fostering of digital resilience and trust. This program will explore the integration of modern security protocols and intelligent defense systems into industry production, operations, and business helps to safeguard proprietary data and maintain business continuity in a competitive environment. This program highlights the role of cybersecurity professionals in securing modern industries, while addressing challenges such as the rapidly evolving threat landscape, regulatory compliance, and the need for interoperable security solutions to support their efforts to achieve success and sustainable trust in IR 4.0.

Dr. Ang Sau Loong is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Computing and Information Technology at Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TARUMT). He holds a PhD in Computational Intelligence from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and has over 15 years of experience in teaching and research. Specializing in deep learning, machine learning, big data analytics, and business analytics, Dr. Ang also holds a recognized Cisco certification, reflecting his deep interest in network security and understanding the mechanisms behind cyberattacks. He has made significant contributions to both academia and industry. As one of the HRDF-certified trainers, Dr. Ang conducted several training sessions on deep learning, business analytics, and data visualization tools such as Tableau and Power BI. His ability to integrate academic knowledge with practical industry projects has proven crucial for advancing IR 4.0 technology, particularly in areas where data analysis intersects with security. Dr. Ang's research has been actively published in journals, covering topics such as AI-based healthcare analytics, automated trading systems, and data classification using Bayesian Networks. With his passion for work, he continues to bridge the gap between research and industry needs while fostering innovation and excellence in computational intelligence

May 19

Digital Boundaries and the Employee: Preventing Digital Burnout

May 19 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Assistant Professor Dr. Kamelesh D/O Ravesangar, Department of Accountancy and Business from Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology

This program addresses a fundamental challenge emerging from the convergence of Digital Transformation (DT) and the prevalent push for organizational agility: the systemic erosion of work-life boundaries. The seamless connectivity provided by mobile technologies and real-time platforms establishes an "always-on" expectation that significantly impedes employee recovery and sustained performance. This session will analyze the behavioral and operational consequences of this constant accessibility, focusing on how it fuels widespread digital burnout. Protecting employee boundaries is not merely an individual welfare measure but a strategic imperative for maximizing human capital in the digital era. This program will provide clear, actionable frameworks for institutional intervention, emphasizing strategic leadership and policy design.

Key areas covered include establishing formal "Right to Disconnect" policies to legally and culturally empower employees; implementing communication norms to manage message traffic (e.g., protocols for off-hours correspondence); and redesigning digital workflows to prioritize focused effort over reactive availability. This approach enables organizations to mitigate risks associated with high turnover and diminished performance, fostering a workforce capable of the concentration and ethical judgment necessary for enduring entrepreneurial success. The central message is that setting clear digital limits is essential for sustained productivity, moving organizations from a state of reactive exhaustion to one of proactive, focused engagement.

Dr. Kamalesh Ravesangar is the Associate Dean and Assistant Professor at Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management & Technology in Malaysia. She has over a decade of teaching experience, having taught Certificate, Diploma, Degree, and MBA students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds at private colleges and universities. Prior to her academic career, she gained professional experience in the education, manufacturing, recruitment, and engineering sectors. She is a Professional Member of the Malaysian Institute of Human Resource Management and holds both a PhD and a Master's degree in Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management. Her areas of specialization include human resource management, human resource development, and organizational behavior studies. Dr. Kamalesh has chaired sessions at international conferences and authored more than 30 articles and book chapters on topics such as net zero, sustainability, AI in HRM, employee well-being, and HR-related perspectives. She serves on the editorial boards of the Institute of Industry and Academic Research Incorporated in the Philippines and PiscoMed Publishing in Singapore, and she is also an editor for IGI Global Books. In addition, she is a peer reviewer for the Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting, Springer Nature, and the International Journal of Research and Innovation in Applied Science (IJRIAS). She has received a "Certificate of Excellence in Reviewing" for her contributions and was honored as the "Outstanding Reviewer of the Year" in both 2023 and 2024 by the Institute of Industry and Academic Research Incorporated, Philippines.

May 21

Data Mining and Business Forecasting

Digital Academy
May 21 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Dr. Choo Jun Tan from Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology

This program will unlock the future of business forecasting which is designed specifically to help participants understand how Data Mining (DM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) work together to predict future trends. This program provides a foundation for beginners, defining DM as the systematic process of sorting through large datasets to identify relationships and patterns, thereby enabling enterprises to make more informed business decisions. Five key iterative steps will be explored on how AI works, starting with essential Data Preparation (which is crucial for accurate results), moving through Choosing the Right AI Tool (such as Machine Learning for pattern recognition or Deep Learning for complex tasks like Natural Language Processing), and concluding with Applying Real-World Applications.

This program offers immediate practical value by demonstrating how trained AI is used for critical tasks, including supporting healthcare triage and predicting student early drop-out rates. By the end of the session, participants will understand the systematic workflow encompassing Data Exploration and Preprocessing, Model Fitting, Model Evaluation, and Model Refinement, equipping you with core knowledge in this key discipline within data science.

Dr. Tan is currently affiliated with Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT), Penang Branch Malaysia, where he serves as an academician. His academic foundation includes a Ph.D. in Evolutionary Computing from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Furthermore, he holds the professional accreditation of Certified Professional Technologist (Ts), recognized by the Malaysia Board of Technologists (MBOT). His scholarly concentration primarily revolves around the development of computational intelligence models, with a specific interest in applying evolutionary algorithms to address intricate multi-objective optimisation challenges. This expertise finds practical relevance across areas such as smart manufacturing, electric vehicle design, and data mining.

Dr. Tan has accumulated over 15 years of industry experience, having served in significant capacities in addressing business challenges with software solutions. This includes roles such as Senior Software Architect and Software Development Team Lead/CTO within companies holding Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status. Complementing this is nearly 10 years of academic engagement, during which he has had the opportunity to instruct in Software Engineering, Data Science, and Artificial Intelligence. His research endeavors have been supported by securing approximately RM600,000 in research funding. He has also successfully supervised postgraduate students. As of 2025, his scholarly output comprises 16 articles indexed in the Web of Science (WOS) and 11 publications indexed in Scopus.

Dr. Tan has been honored with 8 international and 10 national recognitions for his work. Among these acknowledgements are the International Gold Award in Professional Science Technology (2025), the International Best Paper Awards in ICT-PEP (2025) and ICEMS (2021), and the National MIMOS Prestigious Award (MPA) in 2014 (Academia Category). Beyond his primary roles, he remains actively engaged in the research community, serving periodically as an invited international research scientist, international conference chairman, and reviewer for high-impact journals.

June

Tax Policy in Green Future: Socio-Economic Implications for Developing Countries

International Conference
Covenant University
June 11-13

In Nigeria during recent times, tax policy reforms, involving tax bills such as Nigerian Tax Administration Bills, National Tax Bills, Nigerian Revenue Tax Bills and Joint Revenue Board Bill have prompted the need for a better understanding of tax policy intentions and proposed implementation modalities. Furthermore, during the near future, socio-economic landscapes of most developing countries call for deliberate planning and administration of policy formulation and implementation as it affects the environment, social and governance framework (ESG). In response, governments must be intentional in the approach of policy formulation and implementation to address future challenges. There is also a need for adequate knowledge and cooperation among all the economic agents including the private sector and the public sector. In light of these developments, Covenant University CEPDeR and OPCCIMA will organize a tax conference to bring together all the stakeholders for exchange of ideas on both the current issues and future outlook of tax policy and implementation.

For further details on this international conference, please contact admin.cucled@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

June

Re-Engineering Leadership Systems and Institutions for Sustainable Development in Africa

International Conference
Covenant University
June 11-13

Topics for this international conference include: Transforming Leadership Systems for Effective Governance and Institutional Resilience; Leadership Accountability, Transparency and the Fight Against Corruption; Leadership for Economic Diversification and Industrial Competitiveness in Africa; Institutional Reforms for Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Job Creation; Leadership for Inclusive Growth and Social Equity; Education, Youth Empowerment and the Future of Work in Africa; Leadership for Climate Action, Environmental Sustainability, and Green Governance, Institutional Innovations for Renewable Energy and Resource Efficiency; Leadership for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies in Governance; Re-engineering Leadership Recruitment; and Re-Engineering Electorate Democracy in Africa

For further details on this international conference, please contact admin.cucled@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

September

Advances in the Development of Nanostructured Electrochemical Devices for the Detection of Oxidative DNA Damage

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
Date: September 8, 2026 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Dra. Georgina Alarcón Ángeles from UAM-Xochimilco

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project on the development of DNA-based electrochemical devices and how they are essential for advancing sensitive, portable, and low-cost tools with potential impact on diagnosis, therapeutic monitoring, and personalized medicine. DNA-based electrochemical devices constitute an analytical platform of great relevance for the detection of oxidative damage, as they allow the direct evaluation of alterations in genetic material. This feature confers high biological relevance and positions them as promising tools for early diagnosis.

In this context, the fundamentals of DNA electrochemical biosensors will be addressed, including strategies for DNA immobilization on graphite electrodes and the incorporation of nanomaterials as key elements to enhance sensitivity and electron transfer. Likewise, the main electrochemical and physicochemical characterization techniques used to evaluate immobilization and system performance will be discussed. Finally, the application of these devices in the assessment of oxidative damage induced by reactive oxygen species, drugs, and other genotoxic agents will be analyzed, highlighting advantages such as rapid response and analytical simplicity.

Dr. Alarcón's research focuses on the study and chemical characterization of molecules related to health care, as well as the development, design, and application of nanotechnology for (bio)sensors. She is also involved in teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in analytical chemistry. Dr. Alarcón has supervised undergraduate and graduate theses. She is a reviewer for scientific articles in journals such as the Mexican Chemical Society, Elsevier, and IEEE Sensors Journal. She has been a reviewer for national (CONACYT) and international (French National Research Agency (ANR)) projects. She has published around 40 articles in indexed international journals and 6 chapters in scientific books with international publishers such as Elsevier and Wiley. To date, she has over 1300 citations.

September

Financial Inclusion and Digital Tools

Digital Academy
September 15 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Faculty from Research Support and Management. FALF/FREF, Nelson Mandela University
Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

This program focused on bridging the gap in financial access will explore digital tools and platforms that enhance financial inclusion for entrepreneurs. Participants will learn about online banking, crowdfunding, and fintech solutions that can support their ventures. The program will include initiatives to establish living labs in underserved communities to test financial inclusivity strategies and tools.

This program will feature speakers from a South African commercial bank and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) focusing on how digital banking, fintech solutions, and supportive policy frameworks advance financial inclusion for entrepreneurs. Together, they will highlight practical digital tools, funding platforms, and living lab initiatives that expand financial access and support inclusive entrepreneurship in underserved communities.

September

Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age

Digital Academy
September 22 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Faculty from Research Support and Management. FALF/FREF, Nelson Mandela University
Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

This program will examine how digital transformation reshapes the entrepreneurial landscape. Discussion will explore how digital technologies, innovation platforms and government support programs enable digital startups, support SMME growth and create new entrepreneurial and career opportunities in South Africa's evolving digital economy. Participants will learn about the intersection of technology and entrepreneurship while exploring case studies of successful digital startups. Additionally, the program will launch an Innovation Bootcamp and policy roundtables to discuss best practices and policy implications in digital entrepreneurship.

This session will feature speakers from Huawei South Africa and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) focusing on entrepreneurship in the digital age.

October

E-commerce Essentials for Entrepreneurs

Digital Academy
October 6 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Faculty from Research Support and Management. FALF/FREF, Nelson Mandela University
Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

Participants in this program will gain foundational knowledge about e-commerce, including setting up online stores, managing logistics, and utilizing data analytics to drive sales. This program will incorporate efforts to embed entrepreneurship into existing curricula by collaborating with faculties and integrating e-commerce education.

This program will feature speakers from a leading e-commerce company and Nelson Mandela University guiding participants on setting up and scaling online stores, managing logistics and using data analytics to drive sales.

October

Building a Personal Brand Online

Digital Academy
October 13, 2026 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Faculty from Research Support and Management. FALF/FREF, Nelson Mandela University
Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

This program will guide participants in establishing a strong personal brand through digital platforms. Topics will include effective self-promotion, network building, and leveraging social media for career growth. The session will also highlight successful alumni who have built strong personal brands using digital tools.

This program will feature a digital marketing specialist and a Nelson Mandela University academic/alumnus guiding participants on building a strong personal brand online.

October

Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Final Competition

Hosted by Guangzhou University
Date: To Be Announced

This seventh annual competition sponsored by the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities and hosted by Guangzhou University will be held from March to October 2026. The theme of this year's program is "Expanding the Reach of Sustainable Development". Consisting of three levels (In-School Preliminary Competition, Online Semifinal Competition and Final Competition), the Final Competition will be held in Guangzhou, China with participants attending either in-person or online to compete for almost 250,000 RMB or equivalent in prize award money in the categories of Concept and Start-Up Teams.

For further information, please contact Xiaojia Liu (Maggie) @ xiaojia_liu52@gzhu.edu.cn

November

Bi-annual Alliance Council Meeting

Hosted by Guangzhou University
Date: To Be Announced

As found in the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities charter, the Council is the highest decision-making body of the Alliance and it is to be assembled bi-annually in Guangzhou. This Council meeting for all the leaders of our member and affiliate member universities participating in person or online assures the continued success of our Alliance.

For further information, contact Xiaojia Liu (Maggie) @ xiaojia_liu52@gzhu.edu.cn

November

International Conference on Engineering for a Sustainable World" (ICESW 2026)

Hosted by Covenant University
November 23 – 26

The 9th International Conference on Engineering for a Sustainable World (ICESW 2026) will be hosted by Covenant University's Department of Mechanical Engineering in collaboration with the University of Pretoria's Department of Chemical Engineering from November 23 - 25. This prestigious event will bring together global experts, researchers, policymakers, and industry professionals to discuss cutting-edge advancements in engineering, sustainability, clean technology, and innovation. This Conference will also provide a golden opportunity to meet experts and develop new collaborations on the fundamentals, applications, and products from various fields such as sustainable energy, sustainable cities, engineering innovations, clean technology/production, sustainable materials, engineering, mechatronics, renewable energy systems, etc. The conference's technical sessions will focus on sustainable engineering, environmental advancements, and innovative materials.

For further details on this international conference, please contact admin.cucled@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

November

Optimizing Precision Agriculture Artificial Intelligence (AI) Models for Improved Performance and Broader Applications

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
November 26 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Dr. Thuseethan Selvarajah from Charles Darwin University

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project focused on leveraging advancements in AI to address critical challenges in precision agriculture. Precision agriculture seeks to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of agricultural practices by utilizing data-driven techniques to monitor, analyze, and optimize crop production and resource management. This project emphasized the development and optimization of AI models tailored to solve problems such as crop health monitoring and efficient resource allocation, while ensuring scalability and adaptability across diverse agricultural systems. Research explored innovative AI approaches, including the integration of advanced neural networks and real-time data analysis, to improve model accuracy, reduce computational complexity, and enhance decision-making capacity.

By addressing these challenges, this project aimed to deliver practical solutions that can be deployed in various agricultural contexts, from smallholder farms to large-scale industrial operations. This initiative will not only contribute to the growing body of knowledge in artificial intelligence and agriculture but also support global efforts towards food security, sustainability and abilities for farmers.

Dr. Selvarajah has made significant contributions to deep learning, focusing on emotion recognition, precision agriculture and continual learning, all of which are relevant to this project. He has created various methods, such as unimodal and multimodal fusion for emotion recognition, a technique for estimating emotion intensity, and an end-to-end active learning framework for predicting complex emotions in real-world settings. His work also includes early recognition of plant diseases and pest recognition. Additionally, he has developed a continual learning framework, a knowledge distillation method, and a deep active learning system for various applications. He also has collaborations with the following academics in Australia and China and published many articles in precision agriculture in top rank (i.e., Q1 in SciMago ranking) journals and top-tier conferences. Furthermore, five additional articles are currently under review for publication.

November

Digital Tourism Geographies: Placemaking via Role Playing Video Games

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
November 27 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Beijing Time)
Professor Cheer Joseph Martin from Middle East Technical University

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project on the role that tourism and the wider visitor economy development can play in boosting the flagging fortunes of rural and peripheral areas around the globe. The development of creative cultures for tourism development is increasingly becoming more prominent (Wang et al, 2023), especially where digitalization and digital platform engagement are concerned (Yuan, 2024). The use of social media platforms, for example, is widely considered to offer immense support to destination development and management efforts. These platforms are leveraged by organizations, firms and social media influencers to build awareness and promote visitation to places.

The use of user-generated and creative content has now come to be seen as an indispensable ally for destination managers for a range of reasons, including their effectiveness at building greater market awareness and consumer reach, their cost effectiveness, and their ability to become 'viral' across the various social media platforms. The place of video games as another mechanism for the promotion of destinations for tourism has burst onto center stage more recently, through the emergence of Black Myth Wukong (BMW). This research seeked to launch an exploratory project investigating the extent to which BMW is transforming cultural and tourism landscapes in places featured in the game (Hou, 2024). BMW could be an invaluable example of how new creative cultures help underline rural revitalization efforts where tourism plays a central role.

DATES TO BE ANNOUNCED

TBA

International Conference on Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

International Conference
Nelson Mandela University

This international conference seeks to engage academics, industry leaders, policymakers, and students in discussions centered around advancing entrepreneurship and financial inclusion. The event will provide a platform for sharing research findings, innovative practices, and strategies to enhance financial access and entrepreneurial capacity among marginalized communities. The conference theme is Innovative Strategies for Enhancing Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurial Growth and proposed conference objectives include: Promote Knowledge Sharing: Facilitate the exchange of research findings and practical experiences among diverse stakeholders to foster innovation in entrepreneurship and financial inclusion; Encourage Collaboration: Create partnerships amongst participants to address critical challenges in financial access and support entrepreneurial initiatives; and Inspire Innovative Solutions: Engage participants in discussions around cutting-edge fintech strategies and policies designed to empower marginalized communities.

For further information, please contact Ndaba Thabile (Ms) @ Thabile.Ndaba@mandela.ac.za

TBA

Agronomic Effects of Field Inoculation with Bacteria Consortia in Wheat Planting

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
Professor Teofilo Vamerali from the University of Padova

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project on wheat which is the most cultivated cereal in the world with 220 million hectares. The productivity of this crop is closely linked to the application of high doses of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium fertilizer, whose efficiency is on average low due to losses by leaching, denitrification and volatilization. The high costs of chemical fertilizers require improvement in fertilizer use efficiency and the identification of biological fertilization strategies. In this context, the use of bio-fertilizer (nitrogen-fixing bacteria), and phosphorus and potassium solubilizers to reduce the usage of chemical fertilizer represent a new frontier for pursuit.

Professor Vamerali Teofilo focuses on agronomy. His areas of expertise and main research topics include: developing new root research methods; effects of root growth and turnover on crop productivity under stress conditions; the role of biofertilizers in sustainable agriculture. He has published 232 articles (chapters) in related fields, including 62 SCI papers, with a total of 2003 citations.

Abrupt Eco-environmental Changes in Coastal Lagoons Since the Anthropocene and their Ecological Restoration; Earth and Environmental Sciences

TBA

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
Professor Meryem Beklioglu and Professor Erik Jeppesen from Middle East Technical University

Innovative Monitoring Approaches for Large-Scale Risk Assessment of the Built Environment

TBA

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
Professor Francesca da Porto from the University of Padova

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project which identified key parameters essential for characterizing the vulnerability to major natural hazards of various structures, from civil buildings to cultural heritage assets. In addition, the project sought to develop and test advanced monitoring approaches, involving the fusion of satellite-acquired data and spatial analysis and management tools, along with early warning tools.
The ultimate goal for this research was to develop innovative methodologies to support rapid, yet reliable, large-scale multi-hazard risk assessments in order to evaluate the impacts of multiple natural hazards on structures, provide guidance on the need to intervene quickly with risk mitigation and reduction actions, as well as provide information on the structural health condition and remaining life of structures. This information, in turn, will be essential for the effective design of maintenance and retrofit intervention programs.

Francesca da Porto is Vice-Rector for Sustainability, past Vice-Rector for Buildings, Full Professor and PhD Tutor at the University of Padova. She obtained her PhD in Modelling, Conservation and Control of Structures in 2005 at the University of Trento. Over the past twenty years, her research focused on monitoring, assessment and mitigation of seismic vulnerability of historic structures, and seismic risk analysis at territorial scale. Prof. da Porto published more than 300 papers on national and international journals and conferences (70 on indexed journals), and she published eight monographs/book chapters.

Navigating the Nexus: Understanding the Interplay of Global Warming and Invasive Species on Ecosystems and Economies

TBA

Digital Academy Program related to Joint Research Project
Professor Guy Midgley from Stellenbosch University

This Academy program is the culmination of an Alliance joint research project contributing to our understanding of the combined risks posed by global warming and invasive species, built from fundamental projections of ecological risks, that will be translated into economic risk scenarios. Research identified strategies for Nature-based mitigation and adaptation to avoid or lessen adverse economic impacts which take invasive species risks into account through interdisciplinary collaboration.