



Peer-Review Statements

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All of the articles in this proceedings volume have been presented at the 9th *Focus Conference* on 17th–19th August, 2022 in Durban, South Africa. These articles have been peer reviewed by the members of the Technical and Scientific Committee and approved by the Editor-in-Chief, who affirms that this document is a truthful description of the conference's review process.

1 Review Procedure

A rigorous double-blind peer review system was followed to ensure the highest quality in the conference proceedings and comply with the requirements for subsidy as stated by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Each submission was examined by at least 2 reviewers independently. *The conference submission management system was EquinOCS.*

The submissions were first screened for generic quality and suitability. After the initial screening, they were sent anonymously for peer review by matching each paper's topic with the reviewers' expertise, taking into account any competing interests. A paper could only be considered for acceptance if it had received favourable recommendations from the two reviewers.

Authors whose manuscripts were accepted after the double-blind review process was completed were provided with anonymous reviewers' reports and requested to submit their full papers addressing these comments. Evidence was required relative to the authors' actions regarding the comments received. Based on the reviewer reports, the editors reserve the right to make minor alterations and accept or reject any manuscript. Final papers are published in the conference proceedings after evidence and after further technical alignment by editors and copy editors.

2 Quality Criteria

Reviewers were instructed to assess the quality of submissions solely based on the academic merit of their content along the following dimensions;

1. Relevance to overall conference theme and objectives;

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2. Relevance to selected sub-theme;
3. The originality of material;
4. Academic rigour and critical review of literature
5. Contribution to knowledge and practice;
6. Research methodology, empirical findings, and robustness of analysis of findings/results.

In addition, all of the articles have been checked for textual overlap in an effort to detect possible signs of plagiarism by the publisher.

3 Key Metrics

Total submissions	97
Number of articles sent for peer review	41
Number of accepted articles	18
Acceptance rate	18.5%
Number of reviewers	19

Of the 97 abstracts originally received, 18 papers were finally accepted for publication, representing an acceptance rate of 18.5%. To be eligible for inclusion these papers had to receive one of three recommendations from at least two reviewers, namely:

1. Accepted for publication or
2. Provisional acceptance provided minor changes/corrections are made or
3. Re-submit for publication provided author/s reconsider/s the areas of concern

4 Competing Interests

At no stage did the editors, get involved in the review of their own authored or co-authored papers. The role of the editors was to ensure that the final papers incorporated the reviewers' comments and arrange the papers into the final sequence based on the conference presentation schedule as captured on the conference proceedings and Table of Contents.

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