

## Addendum A: Cover Page for Applications

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National University Teaching Awards

2026

This cover page must precede all applications and must be endorsed and signed by the relevant DVC or designated senior authority

### Category of Submission

Select the appropriate category for this application:

|                                                                                                                            |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Beginner teachers (applicants are in their first five years of teaching)</b>                                            |   |
| <b>Experienced teachers (who have made contributions over a lifetime/shown leadership in discipline-specific teaching)</b> | X |
| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning Specialists</b>                                                                                 |   |
| <b>Teaching and Learning Collaboration Teams</b>                                                                           |   |

### Applicant Information

|                                                        |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
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| Faculty/Department/Centre:                             | Department of Accounting |

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| Date:             | 29 May 2026                                                                       |

**Nominator's Information: DVC or designated senior representative of university executive**

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name and Surname:                                                                                          | Prof Loretta Feris                                                                  |
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| I, the undersigned do hereby declare that the abovementioned applicant is the official university nominee. |                                                                                     |
| Signature:                                                                                                 |  |
| Date:                                                                                                      | 28 May 2026                                                                         |

## 1. Introduction

This portfolio is dedicated to the students who had every reason to quit, but quietly and courageously chose not to. It belongs to students like Mulungisi\*, whose father disputed his paternity and refused to support his studies, yet he persisted. It belongs to Steward\*, who balanced the demands of rugby to fund his education and eventually became a Springbok rugby player in 2022. It belongs to Xavier\*, who lost his mother during his studies and was ultimately supported by the generosity of a philanthropist. It belongs to Joe\*, whose funding did not materialise, leaving him sleeping in the library until temporary hostel placement and financial support could be arranged. It belongs to Relebogile\*, whose academic journey changed after she fell pregnant, yet she continued pursuing growth through a different path. And it belongs to Jaco\*, who endured the emotional strain of heartbreak while continuing to show up despite the impact on his mental well-being. (\* pseudonyms)

Their stories are seldom visible in transcripts or marks, but rather in quiet perseverance and the repeated decision not to give up. If teaching is a form of gardening, these students remind us that growth rarely happens in perfect conditions. It happens through uncertainty, hardship, and resilience. Still, they grow, and I have had the privilege of witnessing part of that journey.

This portfolio presents my own journey from a teacher-centred educator to a student-centred lifelong learner. The reflections that follow are not presented as a linear movement from deficiency to mastery, but rather as an ongoing process of questioning, adaptation, and renewal. My teaching has been shaped by large and diverse cohorts, disciplinary demands, institutional expectations, and broader societal and technological shifts within higher education. Within this complexity, I have sought to cultivate learning environments that balance structure with flexibility, rigour with empathy, and tradition with innovation.

To introduce this reflective journey, I have written a reversible poem inspired by the work of Brian Bilston. When read from top to bottom, the poem reflects a teacher-centred perspective characterised by control and knowledge transmission. When read from bottom to top, the same lines reveal an alternative perspective that foregrounds student voice, agency, and the transformative potential of humanising pedagogy.

The inclusion of this poem is not merely stylistic, but conceptual. It underscores the central theme of this portfolio: teaching is not static, and recognising the human in the learning process will yield the development of ethical, critically engaged citizens of the future. Start by reading the poem from top to bottom:

***Make today matter***

I only have a short time

So quick, let me tell you

Knowledge is only transferred by me

I can't believe

I have it in me to change how my students think and learn

It is all too late, too late

How can you say

*But try a little harder*

*Cultivate the soil they grow in*

My students are finding their place in the world

While assessments guide their learning

I am powerless

Don't be so foolish as to imagine that

Students have a voice

Big enough to change the world

The decisions we make each day are

Unimportant

How much we care, the engagements we have

How naïve to think

The mindset of decades could be re-imagined

In a few lectures

If I could just embrace change

Source: Written by the author, inspired by "Every day the planet burns a little more" by Brian Bilston

Now read the poem again, but start from the bottom up, reading line by line...

My transition towards humanising pedagogy aligns with Freire's (1970) conception of education: it positions students as whole human beings whose lived experiences, dignity, and agency should be recognised within the learning process. This philosophy increasingly shaped how I approached student support and classroom relationships, while also resonating with Felten and Lambert's (2020) argument that meaningful learning is fundamentally relationship-rich. Through fostering belonging, supporting transition, encouraging agency, and recognising diverse starting points, I aim to cultivate graduates who are not only academically competent but also reflective, resilient, ethically aware, and capable of meaningful contribution to their profession and society.

Alongside this humanising orientation, my teaching philosophy is further informed by constructivist and experiential approaches to learning that position students as active participants in the creation of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. Kottara et al. (2025), in their analysis of blended learning in accounting education, argue that meaningful learning in accounting develops through authentic engagement, collaboration, reflection, and real-world problem-solving rather than through rote memorisation alone. Their work highlights the value of constructivist and connectivist approaches that encourage interaction, teamwork, critical thinking, and participation within learning communities. These principles strongly resonate with my own teaching practice, particularly my emphasis on collaborative Think Tank Teams, authentic assessment, blended learning environments, industry engagement, and the integration of technology to support accessibility and deeper learning. In many ways, my role as an educator resembles that of a gardener: creating the conditions for growth, recognising that students develop differently, and understanding that meaningful learning requires patience, responsiveness, structure, and care.

The sections that follow reflect critically on the contexts that shape my teaching, my understanding of students and their learning needs, my engagement with disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, and my ongoing growth and development as a reflective educator.

## **2. Reflective narrative**

### **2.1. Reflection on context: Understanding the landscape in which learning takes root**

I never imagined that I would become a lecturer. After teaching briefly as an inexperienced graduate in 1997 and later working as an accountant in a corporate environment, I realised that I was deeply drawn to youth development and the transformative potential of education. Although I valued the technical nature of accounting, I became increasingly drawn to spaces of growth, mentorship, and intellectual development, which ultimately led me to higher education.

In 2007, I joined the University of Pretoria as a lecturer in Financial Accounting (FRK111/121), modules characterised by exceptionally large cohorts ( $n > 1400$ ), students from more than 19 programmes, varying levels of accounting exposure, and often limited intrinsic motivation to master the discipline. Shortly thereafter, I became responsible for coordinating the lecturing team. Looking back, my early teaching resembled planting seeds without fully understanding the conditions required for growth. My focus was on curriculum coverage, structure, pace, and efficiency, and I taught largely in the way I had been taught myself.

At the time, I had a limited understanding of pedagogical theory or alternative teaching approaches. I assumed students entered university with similar levels of preparedness, confidence, and language proficiency, and that success depended mainly on discipline and effort. My teaching reflected a highly structured, teacher-centred approach shaped by the realities of large classes and the pressure to “get through the work.” In hindsight, I did not sufficiently consider how inaccessible the discipline might feel to students from different educational and social backgrounds.

Reflecting on this period is uncomfortable because I now recognise how limited my understanding was of the realities many students navigated while trying to succeed academically. I often became frustrated with students balancing their studies with responsibilities such as professional sport or part-time work, interpreting this as a lack of commitment rather than recognising the complexity of their circumstances. Looking back, I am humbled by how much I still needed to learn about empathy, context, and holistic student support.

Over time, however, a series of encounters reshaped both my understanding of higher education and the kind of educator I was becoming. One particularly formative moment emerged during a conversation with a remarkably humble yet highly accomplished rugby player who now represents the Springboks. He explained that he struggled to attend classes consistently because of the demands of his rugby programme. As we discussed possible ways to support him academically, he looked at me with tears in his eyes and quietly said, “Ma’am, if it were not for rugby, I would not be able to study because the bursary pays all my fees.”

That moment stayed with me. It forced me to confront how little I understood about the invisible pressures many students carry while trying to succeed academically. What I had once interpreted as divided commitment, I began to recognise as determination under difficult circumstances. The conversation marked a shift in how I viewed my role. I was not only someone responsible for disciplinary knowledge, but also an educator who could provide guidance, support, and human connection within the demanding landscape of higher education. This is where my transition started.

In many ways, this was the beginning of my growing awareness that teaching does not occur in isolation from broader social, economic, and institutional realities. At a *macro* level, my teaching is shaped by developments in higher education and the accounting profession, both nationally and globally. In South Africa, transformation, decolonisation, and equitable access remain important concerns within a context of unequal schooling systems, economic disparity, and varying levels of preparedness for university. Many students are first-generation entrants navigating unfamiliar institutional spaces while carrying significant social and financial pressures, all of which influence confidence, belonging, and academic engagement.

Globally, the accounting profession is evolving rapidly through advances in technology, artificial intelligence, sustainability reporting, ethical governance, and responsible citizenship. Graduates are therefore expected to demonstrate not only technical competence, but also ethical judgement, contextual reasoning, professional scepticism, and interdisciplinary thinking. These developments have shaped how I design curriculum and assessment by intentionally integrating current business and societal issues into my teaching. Students are encouraged to engage regularly with current affairs through platforms such as News24, Netwerk24, Daily Maverick, and BusinessTech, while lectures and assessments frequently incorporate authentic business scenarios involving governance, sustainability, ethics, and strategic decision-making. To improve accessibility, articles are released in advance to reduce potential language barriers, and students are encouraged to use AI tools responsibly to deepen conceptual understanding. In this way, disciplinary knowledge becomes embedded within authentic contexts that make learning more meaningful and accessible.

At the *meso* level, my teaching is shaped by institutional and professional frameworks. The University of Pretoria's graduate attributes, particularly critical thinking, ethical citizenship, and lifelong learning, inform my curriculum and pedagogical decisions. In addition, accreditation requirements from SAICA, AACSB, and the CHE require constructive alignment between learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment practices (Biggs, 1996).

My involvement in curriculum development within the Chartered Accountancy (CA(SA)) programme, particularly BUS100, reflects active engagement with these expectations. Since 2024, I have served as the subject-responsible lecturer and first-year coordinator for BUS100 within the revised CA(SA) programme, a rigorous pathway spanning more than seven years of academic and professional preparation. This role requires continual balancing between maintaining disciplinary rigour and creating accessible, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.

My growing engagement with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) significantly shaped how I responded to these contextual realities. Until around 2013, I largely reproduced familiar

pedagogical approaches because I lacked confidence in my own educational understanding to question existing practices critically. From 2014 onwards, however, I became increasingly intentional in engaging with SoTL literature, which reshaped my understanding of teaching, learning, and student development. The literature challenged me to move beyond assumptions about what students “should” be able to do and instead to consider how institutional structures, classroom culture, and pedagogy influence learning and belonging (Tinto, 1993; Strayhorn, 2012).

A significant turning point occurred in 2014 while attending an academic conference with a close colleague and friend. By then, I had already begun questioning the assumption that all students learn in the same way and at the same pace. Together, we fundamentally redesigned the pedagogical structure of FRK111/121 by introducing a hybrid teaching model that provided students with greater autonomy and flexibility. Students could either attend classes in person or engage through structured online activities supported by a detailed day-by-day work programme. Grounded in learner-centred and constructivist principles (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Weimer, 2013), the model positioned students as active participants in their own learning.

Since its implementation, the modules have consistently achieved improved pass rates, and more than a decade later, the hybrid model remains in use. Several of its principles have since been adopted within second-year Accounting modules, while the original student reward system, *Beans*, later evolved into the *BUS Ticket* system used in the BUS modules (discussed elsewhere in this portfolio). In 2017, the initiative received a Distinguished Team Teaching Laureate Award. Student feedback included these comments: “...*I can work at my pace ahead of the posted recommended schedule...More productivity...It feels like I can (get) more work done.*” (2020 Feedback)

My growing interest in educational scholarship later led to my participation in the Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) Fellowship Programme as part of the 2018/2019 cohort. My TAU project, *Mind the GAP*, explored why first-year students often do not seek assistance when they experience academic difficulty. What emerged from this research was both insightful and unsettling: many students associated help-seeking with vulnerability and exposure, particularly within a context where most students were not English home-language speakers. Consider what one of the participants said:

*“A lot of black students aren’t very confident in their English and wouldn’t seek help as they don’t want to be judged.” (Anonymous participant – 2018)*

A limited sense of belonging is often manifested in students remaining silent even when they require support. These findings strongly resonated with literature identifying belonging as a critical factor influencing student engagement, persistence, and success (Tinto, 1993; Strayhorn, 2012).

This project prompted meaningful changes to our FRK tutoring structures. We expanded the tutor cohort to ensure greater diversity and intentionally highlighted the languages tutors could speak within their Learning Management System profiles. Tutors were also encouraged to include photographs and personal introductions so that students could encounter them first as approachable human beings rather than distant academic support figures. Before the changes to our tutoring system, less than 32% attended tutors regularly, but in 2022, 81.2% of students attended at least 75% of support sessions facilitated by tutors. Although these adjustments may appear relatively small, they reflected a much broader pedagogical shift in my thinking: support structures are only effective when students feel psychologically safe enough to access them.

At a *micro level*, my teaching is shaped by the immediate realities of large-class teaching environments. My classes frequently exceed 400 students, creating both logistical challenges and opportunities for innovation. Working with large cohorts often feels like tending an expansive garden where systems and structures are necessary to ensure that no student is overlooked. These realities require teaching and assessment approaches that are scalable while remaining pedagogically sound.

Resource constraints remain a significant contextual reality within higher education. Limited budgets for markers, disparities in access to learning resources, and financial pressures experienced by students all influence teaching and assessment decisions. To mitigate some of these pressures, I intentionally avoid prescribing textbooks unless they are required in subsequent years of study. I also negotiated with publishers to combine only the relevant chapters of international textbooks into more affordable customised versions for students. This greatly decreased the price of the textbook from a retail price of R2 220 per book to R670 per book. In addition, I encouraged senior students to donate textbooks, which are then distributed to students free of charge. These interventions may appear practical rather than pedagogical, but they reflect my growing understanding that access to learning is deeply intertwined with broader socio-economic realities.

Disruptions such as Fees Must Fall, COVID-19, and the emergence of artificial intelligence have further reinforced the importance of adaptability within teaching practice. The 2016 Fees Must Fall protests catalysed pedagogical redesign, particularly regarding online and authentic assessment. During this period, I spearheaded the conversion of traditionally structured accounting assessments into higher-order online assessments grounded in authentic application. Unlike many introductory accounting modules that relied heavily on multiple-choice testing within online environments (Tan and Laswad, 2015; Massoudi, Koh, Hancock and Fung, 2017), our approach prioritised authentic, application-based tasks that required reasoning, interpretation, and critical engagement. These practices later proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic when continuity of teaching depended heavily on prior experience with online and blended learning environments.

Artificial intelligence currently represents one of the most significant disruptors shaping higher education. Rather than resisting AI, I have chosen to engage with it critically and constructively within my teaching practice. I encourage students to use AI responsibly to deepen their understanding of discipline-specific terminology, explain concepts in their home languages, and generate application-based learning opportunities. At the same time, I deliberately teach students to evaluate AI-generated outputs critically rather than accepting them uncritically. In doing so, I aim to position AI not as a replacement for thinking, but as a tool that can support deeper engagement, reflection, and critical judgment. In the latest edition of *Teaching Matters*, a university-wide publication, I co-authored an article that details the use of AI as a tool to overcome language barriers.

Taken together, these institutional, professional, social, and technological realities form the broader landscape within which my teaching takes place. Like any garden, this context contains both constraints and enabling conditions that influence when and how growth becomes possible. Large class sizes, language diversity, funding pressures, and varying levels of preparedness create significant challenges, yet institutional support structures, technological opportunities, industry partnerships, and collaborative professional communities simultaneously create opportunities for innovation and meaningful change.

Ultimately, my teaching context has taught me that effective education cannot rely solely on technical expertise or efficient curriculum delivery. It requires continual responsiveness to the realities students bring with them into the classroom, alongside a willingness to adapt teaching practices to changing institutional, societal, and professional landscapes. My development as an educator has therefore been shaped not only by what I teach, but also by an evolving understanding of the environment within which learning takes root and the conditions required for students to flourish.

## **2.2. Reflection on students: recognising diverse starting points and cultivating inclusive growth**

By the time I started lecturing in the Chartered Accountancy (CA) programme, I already had nearly a decade of experience in higher education. Yet entering the CA environment confronted me with a cohort that differed meaningfully from the Financial Accounting (FRK) students I had previously taught. Prospective chartered accountants generally display exceptionally high levels of intrinsic motivation and academic discipline. Many were top performers at school and arrived at university with a strong achievement orientation. Motivation, in particular, has been identified as a key determinant of success in accounting education (Joynt, 2023). For that reason, I design my teaching to cultivate not only disciplinary knowledge but also capitalise on their existing high levels of intrinsic

motivation, resilience, and curiosity. However, this strength often coexists with heightened sensitivity to failure, perfectionism, and anxiety when confronted with academic uncertainty for the first time.

At the same time, similarities with previous cohorts remained evident. Many students are first-generation university entrants, come from under-resourced schools, and approximately 70% are not English home-language speakers. Students enter the programme with differing levels of academic, linguistic, and social capital. Some arrive well prepared, while others require greater support in navigating the language, pace, and hidden expectations of higher education. Like a diverse garden, students begin from different points of growth, requiring different forms of support to flourish.

This understanding fundamentally reshaped my teaching philosophy. Earlier in my career, I viewed academic difficulty mainly through the lens of effort and discipline. Over time, however, engagement with higher education literature led me to recognise that student success is strongly influenced by belonging, confidence, identity, and access to supportive learning structures. Tinto (1993) argues that academic persistence is shaped by students' social and academic integration, while Strayhorn (2012) identifies belonging as a key factor influencing engagement and success. Similarly, Bandura's (1997) work on self-efficacy highlights the importance of students believing in their own capability to succeed. Consequently, my role increasingly expanded beyond content delivery towards creating learning environments where students feel academically capable, supported, and connected.

This became particularly important within a rigorous professional programme such as Chartered Accountancy, where first-year students often experience uncertainty about whether they "fit" within the academic environment. Many silently compare themselves to peers who appear more confident or academically prepared, and if these insecurities remain unaddressed, disengagement may occur long before formal academic failure.

To counter this, I intentionally design opportunities for connection and community-building from the beginning of the academic year. One such intervention is a structured "speed networking" ([Annexure 1](#)) activity during orientation, which leads to the formation of 'Think Tank Teams'. These small groups of no more than five students remain together throughout the year and function as consistent peer-support structures. Although teams initially form through informal student interactions, I guide the process to ensure that no student remains isolated. Students typically gravitate towards peers with similar language, cultural, or schooling backgrounds, which aligns with literature on homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). Rather than resisting this initially, I recognise it as an important source of psychological safety during transition. Over time, collaborative activities gradually expand interactions beyond these familiar networks while preserving students' core support structures.

The Think Tank Teams are particularly valuable during the first few weeks of university as students adapt and transition, as many first-year students struggle with social integration and loneliness. The teams create continuity and accountability, ensuring that students have peers to contact regarding missed work, academic confusion, or emotional difficulties. In many instances, the teams identified struggling students long before formal institutional systems could intervene. Students would often encourage one another to attend class, share resources, or seek support. In this way, the teams functioned not merely as academic structures, but as communities of care.

Creating a sense of belonging also requires reducing unnecessary hierarchical distance between the lecturer and the student. While I maintain clear academic expectations and professional boundaries, I intentionally cultivate an approachable teaching presence. I move throughout the lecture venue rather than lecturing exclusively from the front of the room. I engage students by name where possible, initiate informal conversations before and after class, and remain accessible outside formal teaching time.

*“Something that inspired me to try to implement is knowing the students' names. I am amazed by how many names you know, and I still think it is impossible 😊 . But I am starting to put in effort because I can see how important it is to the students.” – Anonymous peer feedback (2026)*

I have increasingly realised that students are more willing to participate, ask questions, and seek assistance when they experience the lecturer as humanly present rather than institutionally distant. This relational approach became even more important as I encountered increasing levels of student distress. Over the years, students disclosed experiences involving grief, financial hardship, family instability, mental health struggles, relationship breakdowns, and feelings of overwhelming pressure.

*“Dr Joynt is always more than happy to assist students, not only with the module work she teaches, but also with any mental or other issues that students are facing. She always shares a friendly face and makes you excited about what you are about to learn. She is able to connect with students on a personal level and doesn't just treat us 'a student'. She has become our campus mom and we deeply appreciate her.” - Anonymous student feedback (2024)*

While I am not a counsellor, I recognised that students often needed someone who could listen compassionately and guide them towards appropriate support. To strengthen my ability to respond responsibly and sensitively, I completed a [twelve-week counselling course](#) focused on student support and referral practices. This training equipped me not only with listening skills, but also with a greater awareness of how emotional distress manifests academically. Importantly, the counselling course reinforced the value of referral rather than rescue. Before attending this course, I sometimes

felt personally responsible for solving students' difficulties. Over time, I learned that sustainable student support requires partnership with professional structures such as student counselling services, financial aid offices, and academic support centres. My role is therefore not to "save" students, but to notice, respond, and connect them with appropriate support while maintaining dignity and trust. Below is a recent email from a distraught student:

*"Dear Dr Joynt,*

*I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time to consult with me last week and for helping me through all my problems and concerns. I truly appreciate all the effort, patience, and support you showed me. Your guidance meant the world to me, and I am incredibly grateful for your kindness and willingness to help.*

*Thank you once again for everything. I really appreciate you very much."*

- E-mail from a first-year student (2026)

Because many students feel hesitant to approach lecturers directly, I also introduced structured well-being check-ins through anonymous or semi-anonymous online surveys. Simple prompts such as "How are you coping?" or "What is currently affecting your learning?" often revealed challenges that would otherwise remain invisible. I noticed that this generation of students is frequently more comfortable disclosing difficulties through written digital communication than through face-to-face conversations. These surveys are important mechanisms for early intervention. The responses often revealed the hidden emotional realities behind academic performance. Students described exhaustion, anxiety, food insecurity, transport difficulties, loneliness, and fear of disappointing their families. Sometimes a student who appeared disengaged was actually balancing part-time work, caregiving responsibilities, or severe emotional strain. These insights repeatedly reminded me that academic performance cannot be interpreted in isolation from students' lived realities.

Responding to these realities requires more than empathy; it requires pedagogical intentionality. I therefore structure the learning environment to promote clarity, predictability, and self-regulation. One important intervention is the release of a detailed two-week academic programme ([Annexure 2](#)) every second Friday. The program outlines upcoming lectures, preparation expectations, assessments, and support opportunities. It also structures their pre-engagement, engagement, and consolidation activities. Students prepare for concepts before lectures, engage actively during class, and complete consolidation activities afterwards, allowing learning to develop progressively while reducing cognitive overload.

While seemingly simple, this structure significantly reduces uncertainty and helps students develop planning and time-management skills. This approach aligns with theories of self-regulated learning,

which emphasise that successful students require explicit support in developing planning, monitoring, and reflection strategies (Zimmerman, 2002; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Many first-year students have never previously needed structured study systems because school environments provided greater external regulation. University demands a much higher degree of independence, yet students are often expected to develop this independence without explicit guidance. By modelling planning processes and providing predictable structures, I aim to scaffold the gradual development of autonomy.

Understanding students' starting points also requires understanding the schooling systems from which they emerge. Through my involvement with feeder schools, Grade 12 accounting teachers, and school-level accounting assessment moderation, I have gained insight into the realities of secondary education in South Africa. These experiences continually remind me that students' preparedness is unevenly shaped by historical, social, and economic inequalities.

Importantly, I have moved away from deficit-oriented language such as "underpreparedness." While students undoubtedly arrive with different levels of preparation, framing this primarily as deficiency risks reinforcing exclusion and shame. Instead, I increasingly conceptualise students as entering from different starting points. This shift in language reflects a deeper philosophical shift in my teaching. Rather than asking why some students are not yet where the curriculum expects them to be, I ask what forms of support, scaffolding, and opportunity are required to help them progress. This philosophy shapes several targeted interventions within my teaching practice.

A key example is the use of Learning Opportunities (LOs), which are designed as formative assessment activities that progressively develop students' self-regulated learning and evaluative judgement. Students first complete the assessment individually under supervised conditions before uploading their scripts to ClickUP, creating an untampered digital record that supports assessment integrity. Thereafter, while students are still in class, the memorandum is released (online) and students engage in structured self-assessment by marking their own work. During this process, roaming tutors and assistant lecturers provide scaffolded support, helping students interrogate misunderstandings, clarify concepts, and engage critically with assessment criteria. This aligns with Sadler's (1989) notion that students must understand standards and quality to evaluate their own performance meaningfully.

Once students have completed the self-marking process, the scripts are submitted and independently re-marked by the teaching team. This creates opportunities for comparison between students' own evaluations and the feedback from markers, strengthening their evaluative judgement and metacognitive awareness. Finally, once the marking is done and scripts handed back to students,

students complete a “Lost Mark Analysis (LMA),” where they reflect systematically on where and why marks were lost, identify recurring patterns in their thinking, and develop strategies for improvement. This process aligns strongly with principles of formative assessment, feedback literacy, and self-regulated learning, where feedback becomes an active process of reflection and improvement rather than passive receipt of marks (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Carless & Boud, 2018). Lastly, a student’s completed LMA is attached to show the closing of the learning loop.

To further strengthen foundational academic skills that students may lack confidence in developing independently, I also integrate short activities designed to strengthen these skills. “Mental Math” activities strengthen numerical fluency, while “Reading Rigour” exercises improve comprehension and engagement with disciplinary language. These interventions are in-class, intentionally brief (<10 minutes, online) and low-stakes, allowing students to build competence without fear of humiliation or exposure.

Growth mindset theory also strongly informs my interactions with students (Dweck, 2006). I intentionally use language that frames learning as developmental rather than fixed. Students are encouraged to interpret difficulty not as evidence of inability, but as part of the learning process. Phrases such as “You do not understand this *yet*” become important tools for reframing failure as temporary and improvable. A common phrase, adopted from one of my colleagues, resonates frequently in class: “**It** won’t get better, but **you** get better” (referring to the increasingly difficult level of the programme, but with the hope that our students are developed to handle it).

For students accustomed to academic success, this shift is particularly important because many experience profound identity disruption when they encounter failure for the first time. At the same time, I remain cautious about not oversimplifying growth mindset discourse. Encouraging resilience without acknowledging structural realities can become harmful. Students cannot simply “mindset” their way out of poverty, trauma, or systemic inequality. Therefore, a growth mindset functions most ethically when combined with meaningful structural support, empathy, and realistic acknowledgement of students’ contexts.

*“How supportive she was at all times. She was extremely encouraging and made me feel better about not excelling in university yet!”* – Anonymous student feedback (2024)

While supporting struggling students remains important, I also recognise the need to challenge and extend high-performing students. Differentiated instruction requires attention not only to remediation, but also to enrichment (Tomlinson, 2014). Some students require additional challenge to remain intellectually engaged and motivated. I therefore create opportunities for advanced engagement

through professional projects, competitions, and external collaborations. One example is the *CA of the Future* initiative developed in collaboration with Deloitte. The winning teams, as identified through our Forvis Mazars project (see below), are allowed and encouraged to embark on this extracurricular endeavour. Students engage with complex professional scenarios requiring critical thinking, innovation, communication, and ethical reasoning. In 2025, the University of Pretoria achieved second place nationally in this competition.

*“I appreciate that Dr. Joynt teaches us to think like responsible accountants, rather than simply providing us with the ability to answer questions.”* – Anonymous student feedback (2024)

In addition to academic support, I intentionally expose students to professional development opportunities that cultivate resilience, adaptability, and the formation of professional identity. In collaboration with Deloitte, first-year students participate in professional skills sessions such as *Attitude, Resilience, Initiative = Success, Personal Branding, and Presenting with Impact*. These sessions help students navigate ambiguity, communicate confidently, and engage more effectively within professional environments. For many first-generation university students, these experiences provide valuable exposure to professional expectations that are often assumed but seldom explicitly taught. The sessions also align closely with the CA2025 competency framework, which emphasises adaptability, communication, and ethical professional conduct alongside technical competence. Student feedback suggests that the Deloitte skills sessions meaningfully supported students’ professional development, particularly in presentation skills, communication, workplace readiness, and professional identity formation. Deloitte’s reflection is available upon request.

*“I truly appreciate the Deloitte skills sessions as they make my (sic) incorporate all the qualities that an ethical influencer needs to become successful in their career.”*

– Anonymous student feedback, 2026

Similarly, the annual Forvis Mazars Project (access their reflection in [Annexure 3](#)) helps students develop confidence, connectedness, and professional identity within a supportive but challenging environment. Working in Think Tank Teams, students engage with authentic business scenarios and present their ideas to industry professionals and academics. For many first-year students, this is their first experience of being treated as emerging professionals, contributing not only to disciplinary learning, but also to their sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and active participation within professional spaces. This project is discussed in greater detail under “Reflection on knowledge”.

Ultimately, my understanding of students has shifted my teaching approach profoundly over time. I began my career with a strongly teacher-centred orientation, shaped by structure, discipline, technical

accuracy, and the demands of a rigorous professional programme. Over time, however, sustained engagement with students' lived realities, educational scholarship, and reflective practice led me towards a far more humanising pedagogy.

More student responses can be accessed in [Annexure 4](#).

### **2.3. Reflection on knowledge: cultivating knowledge from transmission to co-construction**

My discipline is rooted in the Accounting Sciences, with a particular focus on Business Acumen within the Chartered Accountancy programme. At its core, the discipline develops rigorous technical competence in accounting, auditing, governance, taxation, and business decision-making. Yet technical competence alone is insufficient within the contemporary professional environment. Increasingly, the profession requires graduates who can navigate ambiguity, communicate effectively, exercise ethical judgement, engage critically with information, and respond adaptively to rapidly changing social, technological, and economic environments. SAICA's CA2025 competency framework reflects this shift through its strong emphasis on professional values, attitudes, and acumen (PVAAs), including ethical reasoning, digital literacy, communication, decision-making acumen, and professional scepticism (SAICA, 2021).

In many ways, the discipline resembles a carefully cultivated garden: technical accounting knowledge forms the foundation from which professional competence grows, while judgement, ethics, critical thinking, and adaptability enable students to flourish as professionals capable of meaningful contribution within society. My teaching philosophy positions disciplinary knowledge not as static content to be transferred, but as something students must actively engage with, interrogate, and apply within authentic contexts. Morrow (2009) argues that epistemic access involves more than formal admission to university; students must also gain access to the language, practices, and ways of thinking that characterise the discipline. This understanding informs my intentional use of familiar South African business environments, such as Pick 'n Pay, to contextualise accounting concepts and help students connect theory with governance, sustainability, ethics, and strategic decision-making in ways that are meaningful and accessible.

My commitment to epistemic access significantly shaped my involvement in textbook development. During my years teaching Financial Accounting (FRK111 and FRK121/122) (2007 – 2023), I became increasingly aware of a gap in the market for introductory accounting resources written for users rather than preparers of financial information. Most available textbooks were written primarily for students pursuing the technically rigorous CA pathway and therefore assumed levels of disciplinary immersion that many students outside the programme did not yet possess. In response, I co-authored

six introductory accounting textbooks (three workbooks and three question books) aimed at making accounting concepts more accessible, digestible, and contextually meaningful for students who did not require the full technical depth of professional accounting training. These textbooks deliberately use plain English, contextual examples, scaffolded explanations, and simplified conceptual language to support students who are second-language speakers or first-generation entrants into higher education. Consider the following definition of “faithful representation” extracted from the IFRS Conceptual Framework:

*To be useful, financial information must not only represent relevant phenomena, but it must also faithfully represent the substance of the phenomena that it purports to represent.*

This concept was explained in our textbook in the following way, aiming to be concise and easier to understand:

- **Faithful representation:** Information included in financial statements must be a faithful representation of what happened in an entity. Faithful representation implies that the information must be:
  - Complete;
  - Neutral; and
  - Free from errors.

**Source:** Extract from Introduction to the understanding of Accounting (Workbook 7<sup>th</sup> edition, page 17, Bezuidenhout, S., Cloete, M. & Joynt, C, 2022, ISBN 9781928481157)

The goal was never to dilute disciplinary knowledge, but rather to create more accessible entry points into the discipline without compromising conceptual integrity. This philosophy also informs my lecture design and material development. Lecture slides are carefully structured to foreground key concepts without overwhelming students cognitively. Rather than saturating slides with dense technical information, I attempt to create visual and conceptual clarity while still encouraging critical engagement and discussion. In many ways, this resembles preparing fertile soil before planting. Students are far more likely to engage deeply with complex concepts when the learning environment reduces unnecessary barriers to participation.

*“I like how Dr Joynt was able to explain complex topics, using simpler explanations.”*

– Anonymous student feedback 2026

This philosophy is reflected in several active learning strategies I use in the classroom. In reversed classroom sessions, I intentionally begin with minimal prepared content and use exploratory questions to encourage students to research, discuss, and co-construct understanding in real time.

Rather than rewarding only “correct” answers, students are encouraged to grapple with ambiguity, disagreement, and uncertainty through questions such as “What is important here?” and “What assumptions are we making?”

Similarly, collaborative activities such as concept flip-charts ([Annexure 5](#)), rotating discussions, and Socratic dialogue encourage active participation in meaning-making. These approaches shift students from passive recipients of knowledge to active contributors and align closely with social constructivist perspectives on learning (Pereira & Sithole, 2019).

Authentic learning and assessment occupy a central place within my teaching practice. One of the most significant examples of this is the annual Forvis Mazars Project, developed in partnership with Forvis Mazars (a medium-sized international audit firm). The project exposes first-year students to highly authentic professional assessment environments where they must integrate sustainability, governance, ethics, communication, and strategic analysis within real-world business scenarios involving organisations such as Pick’n Pay and Boxer. In 2025 we had the privilege of having Sean Summers (CEO) and Lerena Olivier (CFO) engage with students. Students work collaboratively within their Think Tank Teams to analyse business cases, conduct research, compile reports, and prepare presentations for adjudication panels consisting of Forvis Mazars partners, managers, trainee accountants, and University of Pretoria academics. In 2025 alone, more than 80 staff members from Forvis Mazars participated in evaluating 106 student groups across multiple venues on campus. The scale and authenticity of the project create a learning environment that closely mirrors the pressures and expectations of professional practice.

The educational value of the project extends far beyond technical content. Students must collaborate across differences, manage time effectively, defend arguments under pressure, communicate professionally, and respond adaptively to questioning. They begin to experience what it means to function as emerging professionals rather than simply as university students completing an assignment. The project is strongly informed by experiential learning theory, which argues that meaningful learning occurs through active engagement with authentic experiences (Kolb, 1984). Rather than merely memorising theoretical concepts, students learn by applying disciplinary knowledge within realistic contexts that require interpretation, reflection, and decision-making. The project also aligns closely with principles of authentic assessment, where learning activities mirror the complexity and ambiguity of professional practice (Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner, 2004).

The project also contributes meaningfully to students’ professional identity formation and sense of belonging within the accounting profession. Wenger (1998) argues that learning occurs through participation in “communities of practice,” where students gradually begin to see themselves as

legitimate participants within a professional community. By engaging directly with practising accountants, presenting within professional environments, and receiving feedback from industry experts, students begin to envision themselves as future professionals rather than merely first-year students. This early exposure to authentic professional interaction fosters confidence, aspiration, and a stronger sense of belonging within both the discipline and the profession.

Student feedback on the Forvis Mazars Project was overwhelmingly positive, with students particularly highlighting the value of the authentic learning experience, the opportunity to develop presentation and communication skills, and the collaborative nature of the project. Many responses reflected increased confidence in public speaking, teamwork, critical thinking, and professional communication within a high-pressure environment. One student commented:

*“Presentation skills, speaking in public is not my strong point but it forced me to do this and get out of my comfort zone.”* (Anonymous student feedback, 2024)

From 2026, the project will incorporate an in-house developed AI agent, *Thando*, into the assessment process. Before the project day, student groups submit their presentation slides and recorded presentations for evaluation. Thando functions as an objective moderation tool to improve consistency across venues, generates two tailored questions for each group that are posed by adjudication panels during the live presentations, and provides developmental feedback afterwards. This approach aligns with emerging literature on AI-enhanced formative assessment, which suggests that pedagogical AI agents can strengthen personalised feedback, reflection, and authentic learning while retaining human oversight (Mollick et al., 2024). Within my teaching context, AI is therefore positioned not as a replacement for human judgement, but as a tool that enhances consistency, reflection, and professional engagement.

On a practical level, I assist students in becoming familiar with the business and accounting landscape by using short videos, YouTube clips, and contextual material that explain industry activities and accounting concepts before engaging formally with new topics or assessment opportunities. Many first-year students struggle to engage meaningfully with abstract business activities such as risk management, internal control, governance, and auditing concepts because they have never been exposed to how these processes function within real organisations. In collaboration with Pick 'n Pay, we therefore gained access to one of their hyperstores during a live stock-take process and developed a series of inventory videos that introduce students to concepts such as internal control, inventory management, shrinkage, stock counting, segregation of duties, and audit evidence within an authentic business environment ([this link](#) contains the videos used to explain inventory control). By situating these concepts within a real retail setting, students are better able to connect theoretical principles to practical business processes.

To extend this experiential learning further, students are also invited to participate voluntarily in actual Pick 'n Pay stock-taking events at various branches, allowing them to observe and engage directly with inventory control processes in practice. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first partnership of its kind between a university programme and the retail sector, where first-year accounting students are granted structured exposure to live stock-taking processes within a major national retailer. The initiative has developed into a mutually beneficial collaboration between academia and industry, with Pick 'n Pay further requesting that selected student panels provide feedback and reflections based on their observations during the stock-taking process. In this way, students are positioned not merely as observers, but as emerging professionals capable of engaging critically with operational and control environments.

Participation, together with reflective engagement activities on ClickUP, earns students BUS Tickets - a motivational system that originated from the “Beans” initiative previously used in FRK111/121 to encourage engagement beyond compulsory coursework. BUS Tickets aim to promote participation and can be awarded for asking a question in class, answering a question, participation in additional activities for bonus marks and displaying citizenship (e.g. cleaning up after an event). A physical ticket is handed out during class or students can earn an online ticket. Both these forms of BUS Tickets are converted to marks and may contribute a maximum of 10% to a student's year mark for BUS100. Although BUS Tickets are also implemented in the BUS 200 and 300 modules, they carry different weightings towards the year mark across the modules.

Alongside these authentic learning opportunities, I encourage students to use “concept columns” as a metacognitive strategy to monitor their own understanding and identify gaps in knowledge. During lectures, students record unfamiliar concepts or terminology in a dedicated margin on their notes and later use AI tools or other sources to unpack these ideas further. Here is a picture of a student in class who used a concept column ([Annexure 6](#)). Students are encouraged to request explanations in their mother tongue before paraphrasing the concept back into English so that peers or I can evaluate the accuracy of their understanding.

My commitment to reducing language barriers also extends beyond the classroom. I was involved in compiling an Accounting glossary that was translated into Afrikaans, IsiZulu, and Sepedi to support students engaging with unfamiliar disciplinary terminology in additional languages. The glossary aims to improve epistemological access by helping students bridge the gap between everyday language and specialised accounting discourse.

Together, the videos, stock-taking initiatives, concept columns, BUS Tickets and glossary create multiple entry points into the discipline, helping students develop confidence, vocabulary, contextual understanding, and independent learning habits through authentic and engaged participation.

Real-world cases such as the Steinhoff collapse, Tongaat Hulett, Pick'n Pay's restructuring, Boeing's governance failures, and Volkswagen's emissions scandal are regularly incorporated into teaching to contextualise theoretical concepts and stimulate ethical reflection. These examples help students recognise that accounting decisions are never isolated technical exercises, but are embedded within broader social, ethical, and economic systems.

Being an active scholar strengthens both my pedagogy and my ability to explain complex concepts accessibly. Engaging with disciplinary research requires me to grapple with ambiguity and conceptual complexity, often enabling me to develop clearer explanations and more meaningful learning experiences for students. There is therefore a reciprocal relationship between teaching and scholarship: research informs my teaching, while teaching continually generates new questions and opportunities for reflection.

My pedagogical approach is shaped by continuous engagement with scholarship through publications in internationally recognised journals (Terblanche, Joynt, Stiglingh, Du Preez and Diedericks, 2025), conference presentations, keynote addresses, curriculum development initiatives, and textbook authorship. These opportunities expose me to diverse perspectives on accounting education, professional formation, student engagement, and pedagogical innovation, while also creating spaces for critical reflection on my own practice. Recognition through teaching and learning awards further reinforced the importance of reflective and evidence-informed pedagogy rather than intuitive practice alone.

Maintaining disciplinary depth remains essential for credibility within both the accounting profession and higher education. I therefore engage continuously with developments in the field through research, professional engagement, interaction with visiting scholars, and daily engagement with contemporary business developments such as governance debates, sustainability reporting, artificial intelligence, and corporate restructuring. This ongoing engagement ensures that my teaching remains current, relevant, and intellectually rigorous.

As someone who entered higher education without formal training as an educator, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) became particularly important in shaping my practice. Literature on assessment, student engagement, constructivism, and reflective practice provided theoretical grounding for pedagogical decisions that I had previously approached intuitively (Kreber, 2002;

Fanghanel, 2013). It also gave me the confidence to experiment with innovations such as flipped classrooms, H5P interactive videos, gamified learning activities, AI-enhanced assessment, and collaborative knowledge construction, always guided by reflection on what best supports meaningful learning within my context.

#### **2.4. Reflection on growth: from careful tending to flourishing and enabling development**

My growth as an educator has been shaped by a gradual movement from certainty to curiosity, from control to cultivation, and from teaching as delivery to teaching as an ongoing scholarly practice. When I first entered higher education, I relied strongly on the pedagogical models I had experienced as a student. My teaching was structured, disciplined, and content-driven. These qualities remain important in a rigorous professional programme, but over time, I have learned that excellent teaching requires more than organisation and technical competence. It requires continual reflection, responsiveness, humility, and the willingness to adapt when students' learning needs reveal that familiar approaches are no longer sufficient.

Over time, reflective practice became embedded within my teaching rather than remaining an occasional activity. Reflection has become embedded within my teaching through informal student conversations, structured student feedback, peer evaluation, and continuous self-reflection. This process aligns with Schön's (1983) concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, where teaching decisions are continually refined through evidence, experience, and critical self-awareness. I actively invite colleagues from Education Innovation and within my faculty to observe my teaching and provide critique, while also learning from observing the practices of others. These collaborative engagements align with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which positions teaching as a scholarly practice open to dialogue, critique, and improvement (Kreber, 2002). More recently, I have also begun using generative AI tools such as ChatGPT as a form of "assistant lecturer" to support reflective practice, brainstorming, and peer-style evaluation of teaching materials and assessments. [Annexure 7](#) contains ChatGPT's peer evaluation of me as a lecturer. Importantly, these tools supplement professional judgement and provide an additional space for critique, refinement, and continuous improvement.

My growth has also extended beyond my own classroom through faculty initiatives, Brown Bag sessions, the EMS Teaching and Learning Committee, and my role as a TAU Fellow. These spaces allowed me to contribute to and learn from broader institutional conversations on teaching, assessment, and curriculum renewal. My involvement in the development and refinement of the Student Feedback Instrument further strengthened my commitment to reflective and evidence-

informed pedagogy, particularly in understanding how student voice can shape more responsive and inclusive learning environments.

A defining influence on this growth was my realisation that innovation should not be pursued simply for the sake of change, but rather in response to student need. Over time, I became aware that years of teaching do not necessarily translate into growth if one simply repeats the same practices without reflection or adaptation. This challenged me to approach each cohort as a new learning environment requiring fresh attention and responsiveness. Like a garden replanted each season, my classroom is guided by experience but cannot rely on routine alone. Each group of students brings different strengths, anxieties, expectations, and levels of preparedness, requiring me to reflect continually on what should remain stable and what needs to change.

My experimentation with deepfake videos illustrates this growth particularly clearly. By creating artefacts in which I appear to speak languages I do not know ([German](#), [Italian](#) and [Mandarin](#)), I invite students into a discussion about credibility, manipulation, and professional scepticism. What may initially appear humorous becomes a serious opportunity to question the reliability of information in a digital age. This approach supports the development of professional scepticism, a key attribute in accounting and assurance contexts (Hurttt, 2010), and reflects my own growth in designing learning experiences that are memorable, ethically grounded, and professionally relevant.

Over time, this reflective and collaborative approach has shaped my identity as both an educator and a disciplinary scholar. I often describe this identity with humour: “In a room full of accountants, I am the best educator. But in a room full of educators, I am the best accountant.” Beneath the humour lies an important truth. My professional growth has occurred at the intersection of two communities. As an accountant among educators, I bring disciplinary depth, professional standards, and technical credibility. As an educator among accountants, I bring pedagogical language, reflective practice, and a concern for how students come to know, participate, and grow within the discipline.

This dual identity has also influenced my contribution to curriculum development. I have been actively involved in aligning first-year curricula with programme-level outcomes, particularly in relation to critical thinking (I completed several courses through the Foundation for Critical Thinking), ethical decision-making, professional judgement, and business acumen. My role in the implementation of the BUS100 curriculum required me to think beyond individual lectures and consider how a first-year module can contribute meaningfully to the broader CA(SA) pathway. Curriculum development, in this sense, became a form of cultivation: designing pathways through which students gradually develop not only knowledge, but also the values, dispositions, and ways of thinking required of future professionals.

My growth is also evident in how I now conceptualise assessment. Earlier in my career, assessment was more closely associated with measurement, performance, and accountability. While these remain important, I increasingly view assessment as a system that should support learning. I conceptualise assessment as resting on three interrelated components: knowledge creation, authentic application, and retention for future use. Formative assessments help students identify gaps and reflect on their learning, while summative assessments are contextualised within real-world scenarios requiring judgement and decision-making. This reflects constructive alignment, where outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment practices are deliberately connected (Biggs, 1996).

This shift has been particularly important in a professional programme where assessment can easily become high-stakes and anxiety-driven. My aim is not to reduce rigour, but to ensure that rigour is educative. Assessment should challenge students, but it should also help them understand how to improve. It should prepare them for professional complexity rather than merely reward short-term memorisation. In this respect, my approach to assessment reflects my broader development as an educator: I have moved from enforcing standards to designing learning systems that make high standards attainable.

To illustrate how I draft assessments, I will describe the latest paper we wrote in 2026. Year test 2 can be described as a paper that applied several educational principles by embedding theoretical business concepts in authentic, real-world contexts, thereby enabling students to apply abstract knowledge to contemporary business situations. Rather than assessing isolated definitions, the assessment contextualised learning through examples drawn from recognisable South African organisations and business challenges, such as retail competition, banking expansion, taxation, governance, ethics, and internal control systems. This reflects principles of authentic learning and contextualised learning, where knowledge is situated in realistic environments that mirror professional practice. Students were required to interpret business information, analyse scenarios, justify decisions, and apply frameworks such as SWOT, strategy levels, ethics, governance, and taxation in practical settings, thereby supporting constructive alignment between learning outcomes, teaching, and assessment. The paper also promoted critical thinking and application-based learning by requiring students to evaluate competing viewpoints, explain reasoning, and demonstrate judgment rather than recall memorised content. Furthermore, interdisciplinary integration linked accounting, taxation, governance, ethics, strategy, and internal control, helping students understand how foundational business principles interact in organisational decision-making and professional practice.

My mentoring of colleagues has become an important part of my academic identity. I increasingly see educational leadership not as occupying a formal position, but as contributing to the growth of others through generosity, collaboration, and shared reflection. Peer feedback suggests that these

collaborative engagements have meaningfully influenced colleagues' teaching practices, particularly through exposure to innovative approaches such as Think Tanks, Bean Counters / BUS Tickets rewards programmes, critical thinking initiatives, and authentic learning opportunities. Colleagues also highlighted my openness, willingness to support experimentation, and "open door policy" as creating a reflective and supportive environment that encouraged pedagogical growth and confidence. One colleague reflected that *"you empower people who do not have the skill yet,"* while another noted that *"you are an inspiring mentor from whom I have learned a great deal."*([Annexure 8](#)).

The completion of my PhD in Accounting, with a specialisation in Accounting Education, further deepened this contribution. It enabled me to participate more confidently in scholarly conversations about teaching and learning and positioned me to mentor colleagues in areas such as critical thinking, professional scepticism, and accounting education research. This development has strengthened my ability to contribute not only to student learning, but also to institutional and disciplinary development.

Looking back, my development as an educator has been both professional and personal. I have learned to balance empathy with high expectations, care with accountability, and flexibility with structure. I have also learned that growth often requires unlearning. I had to unlearn the belief that control is the same as discipline, that emotional distance is the same as professionalism, and that students who struggle are simply not trying hard enough. These shifts have enabled me to become more responsive, more reflective, and more human in my teaching.

Importantly, my transition towards humanising pedagogy did not require abandoning disciplinary rigour, but rather rethinking how rigour is achieved and sustained. My dual identity - "the educator among accountants and the accountant among educators" - positions me uniquely within this space. My strong grounding in the technical and professional expectations of the CA(SA) programme enables me to maintain the depth, structure, and standards required within a demanding professional qualification, while my growth as an educator has enabled me to create learning environments that are more responsive, inclusive, and student-centred. I no longer see empathy and support as being in tension with excellence, but rather as necessary conditions for meaningful engagement with challenging disciplinary knowledge. Ultimately, I have come to understand that true rigour is not coldness, distance, or inflexibility, but the deliberate creation of learning environments where students are challenged deeply, supported meaningfully, and encouraged to become capable contributors to their profession and society.

### **3. Conclusion**

This portfolio reflects an ongoing journey of growth, reflection, and renewal within higher education. Over time, my teaching has evolved from a predominantly teacher-centred approach focused on content delivery and control towards a more humanising pedagogy grounded in belonging, agency, authenticity, and care. This shift was shaped not only by engagement with educational scholarship, but also by sustained encounters with students whose resilience, complexity, and humanity continually challenged me to rethink what meaningful teaching requires.

At the same time, my development has never involved abandoning disciplinary rigour. Rather, I have come to understand that rigour is strengthened when students are supported meaningfully, challenged authentically, and provided with accessible pathways into the discipline. My dual identity as both educator and accountant enables me to balance the demanding technical expectations of the CA(SA) programme with pedagogical approaches that are inclusive, reflective, and student-centred.

Through authentic assessment, collaborative learning, industry partnerships, technological innovation, and reflective practice, I have sought to cultivate learning environments where students can develop not only technical competence, but also ethical awareness, critical thinking, professional identity, and resilience. Like a gardener, I have learned that growth cannot be forced or standardised; it requires attentiveness, adaptability, structure, and care. Ultimately, this portfolio represents not a completed journey, but an ongoing commitment to creating learning environments in which students can flourish as capable and thoughtful contributors to their profession and society.

### **4. AI use declaration**

Generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT, were used during the compilation of this portfolio primarily for language editing, structural refinement, and reflective engagement with the organisation of ideas. All experiences, reflections, interpretations, and pedagogical practices discussed remain my own. AI was therefore used as a supportive writing and reflection tool rather than as a substitute for scholarly judgement, authorship, or critical reflection.

### **5. References**

Word count = 9732 words