SOUTH AFRICAN
ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING

ONLINE AT 17H00 ON 24 FEBRUARY 2021

In the lecture critical success factors in high technology projects will be examined by comparing the Square Kilometre Array, the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor and the Reactor Conversion Project in the context of a historical view of South African technology policy. These three complex endeavours illustrate rather well what mistakes can be made in the conceptualising and in the execution of such projects. The conclusion is that the confluence of a range of diverse factors such as sufficient prototyping, understanding and balancing political stakeholders, getting the organisational culture right and managing ambitions and aspirations is necessary for success to be achieved.

PLEASE NOTE: Access to lecture through registration only!
A link to join the lecture on Zoom will be sent to registered guests prior to the lecture.

Click here to register by 23 February 2021.

Dr Rob Adam was appointed Director of the South African Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Radio Telescope project in 2016 and became Managing Director of the SA Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) when this new National Facility was declared by the Minister of Science and Technology in 2017.

Rob matriculated from Bishops in Cape Town in 1972 and graduated from the University of Cape Town with a first class Honours in Chemistry in 1978. In 1982 he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for activities undertaken on behalf of the then banned African National Congress. While in prison he studied, obtained Honours and Masters degrees in Theoretical Physics and submitted his PhD thesis in 1990 after his release, following the unbanning of the ANC and other movements.

From an academic perspective, Rob has held teaching and research positions in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and South Africa. He has co-authored over 40 refereed articles in theoretical physics, chemistry and astronomy, published widely on science and technology policy and co-authored a book on science and technology in the Republic of Chile. He has also been a Professor of Physics at both the University of Pretoria and the University of South Africa and has served on the Council of the Academy of Sciences of South Africa.

In 1995, after the first democratically elected South African administration assumed office, Rob joined government. In 1999 he was appointed Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology and held this position until 2006, when he was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa), South Africa's statutory nuclear technology company. In 2012 Rob joined the private sector and became Group Executive: Nuclear at Aveng, a publicly listed multinational infrastructure company, from where he moved to his current positions at SARAO and the SKA. He is a member of the Board of the SKA (representing South Africa) and has chaired or served on numerous other Boards and Councils.