



**SAASTA**

South African Agency for Science  
and Technology Advancement

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## **Media Release**

**25 June 2018**

### **For immediate release:**

#### **South African and SADAC youth to celebrate youth month in style**

South African youth are commemorating and celebrating the youth's of 1976 selfless sacrifice. In June 1976, South African youth sacrificed their lives to liberate people from oppression. This year's Youth Month theme is "Live the Legacy: Towards a Socio-Economically Empowered Youth".

The poor uptake of young people in mathematics and science subjects at secondary and tertiary levels is shrinking the pool of qualified scientists, engineers, innovators and researchers, and subsequently threatening the future of scientific development in South Africa.

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) is making strides in building the science, engineering and technology human resource base in South Africa and communicating the value and impact of science and technology in a dynamic knowledge economy.

In empowering the youth in science, on 27 June 2018, SAASTA will be celebrating the top performing learners in Physical and Life sciences at the 54<sup>th</sup> National Science Olympiad awards ceremony at Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand, in Gauteng.

The awards ceremony will honour South Africa's top young science learners in various categories, such as Top Winners for Life Sciences or Physical Sciences and Top Learners from Previously Disadvantaged schools. The Olympiad contributes toward excellence in

science and has great potential to improve participation levels of previously excluded groups and make science and maths an attractive career choice for learners.

The annual competition comprises an examination, and top learners and schools stand a chance to win exciting prizes. The Olympiad comprises two streams: Physical Science (Physics and Chemistry) and Life Science. Learners can choose to write either the Physical Science or Life Science papers.

The main aim of the competition is to identify talent, to encourage excellence in science education and to stimulate interest in the sciences. It seeks to inspire young people to consider careers in science and technology.

To ensure that talent in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) is identified and nurtured, a group of 120 learners who excelled or demonstrated potential during the Olympiad examination are traditionally invited to participate in a Science Focus Week during the June/July school holidays. The activities consist of stimulating lectures, excursions, relevant industry visits, and other fun events. This culminates in a high profile awards ceremony where prizes are awarded to deserving learners and schools.

The National Science Olympiad is one of the flagship projects of the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement. Since 2005, the 54-year-old project has offered learners in grades 10 to 12 an exciting opportunity to compete in science with fellow learners from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

In 2018, about 43 000 learners from all nine provinces and three SADC countries participated, including learners from Harmony Gold Mining areas in Gauteng, North West and Free State provinces.

### **Ends**

Date: Wednesday, 27 June 2018

Time: 19:00 for 19:30

Venue: at Gallagher Convention Centre, 19 Richards Drive, Midrand in Gauteng

Dress: Traditional/Semi-Formal/Formal

RSVP: No later than Monday, 26 June 2018 (16:00) – email [zamuxolo@saasta.ac.za](mailto:zamuxolo@saasta.ac.za)

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**ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE OLYMPIAD™**

Science Olympiads are used internationally as a means of promoting science and excellence in science. SAASTA's National Science Olympiad not only contributes towards excellence in science, but also has huge potential to expand participation levels of previously excluded groups whilst simultaneously building capability in the sciences.

SAASTA's National Science Olympiad is a project that started in 1964, initially for grade 12 learners, with the objective of promoting science. Now in its 54<sup>th</sup> year, the competition continues to be one of SAASTA's flagship projects. Since 2005, the project has been offering learners in grade 10 to 12 an exciting opportunity to compete and interact in the science arena with fellow learners from all nine provinces in South Africa, Southern African Development Countries (SADC) such as Lesotho, Namibia, and Zimbabwe and also their counterparts in Australia.

The competition is an annual written examination comprising two papers/streams: Physical Science (Physics and Chemistry) and Life Science (Biology). Learners can select which stream they want to compete in and their schools enter them accordingly. The top performing learners and schools are then awarded based on excellence. The top national performers from several categories also stand a chance of receiving an all-expenses-paid trip to the London International Youth Science Forum and the Australian National Science Focus Week. The main focus of the competition is to encourage excellence in science education and to stimulate interest in the sciences. It further seeks to inspire young people to consider careers in science, engineering, and technology (SET).

**ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
ADVANCEMENT (SAASTA)**

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit [www.saasta.ac.za](http://www.saasta.ac.za)

#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF):**

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit [www.nrf.ac.za](http://www.nrf.ac.za)