

Making sure it's possible

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SCIENCE MONTH BLOCK THEMES

AI-Assisted Block Themes Image



science, technology
& innovation

Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SAASTA
South African Agency for Science
and Technology Advancement

TABLE 1: TYPICAL NSM BLOCK SCHEDULE

Time Block (Days)	Block theme	Motivation
1-5	Technology and innovation	Technology and innovation are interwoven, creating a synergistic relationship where one frequently propels the other while continuously transforming the world.
6-10	Science in human health	According to World Health Organization data from 2019, South Africans have a 26% chance of dying between the ages of 30 and 70 from diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease or chronic respiratory diseases. Additionally, the country has the highest rate of obesity among sub-Saharan African nations, with over 28% of adults being obese. The Indigo Wellness Index also declared South Africa to be the world's unhealthiest country.
11	Environmental conservation and management	Approximately 10% of the world's plant species, 7% of the world's reptile, bird and mammal species, and roughly 15% of the world's known coastal marine species are found in South Africa and it is the third most biologically diverse country in the world. South Africa is actively involved in marine science research, including significant research in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean through the South African National Antarctic Programme and the South African Polar Research Infrastructure.
12	Science in service delivery	STI enables governments and organisations to develop new solutions, improve existing processes and create better outcomes, especially in areas like water, sanitation, waste management, energy and health.
13-16	Science in education	STI appears in education through the use of digital tools and curricular and extracurricular activities. Artificial Intelligence and other such technologies offer ways to improve academic efficiency and learning but also raise moral questions that may compromise academic integrity. Over-reliance on these technologies may hinder students' acquisition of critical future-proof abilities. The level of learners' participation in the gateway subjects of mathematics and physical sciences is concerning as it limits the pipeline for science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers and negatively impacts the country's development.
17	Science journalism day	By focusing public attention on specific topics, the media influences what people deem essential and if an issue receives a lot of media coverage, people are more likely to regard it as important. Positioning science journalism as a knowledge intermediary should consequently be prioritised if media coverage of science is to be expanded.



Time Block (Days)	Block theme	Motivation
18	Science for human rights	Every year on 18 July, International Nelson Mandela Day is observed to honour his legacy of defending democracy and human rights. By driving advancements in healthcare, education, information access, food security, and other critical services, STI improves access to fundamental human rights.
19-24	Climate change	South Africa already faces a high level of risk from natural hazards and disasters, including droughts, floods, and storm-related events – all of which are likely to be worsened by climate change, according to the World Bank Group. Understanding climate change is essential to minimising its severe effects and gaining public support for evidence-based mitigating measures.
25	Space science and astronomy	South Africa is a prominent international player in astronomy, housing world-class infrastructure, and with several notable discoveries made in this country. Through initiatives led by the South African National Space Agency in collaboration with the private sector and academic institutions, South Africa also invests in the space sector in, among other things, satellite development, earth observation and space manufacturing
26	Decolonising knowledge systems	Indigenous and scientific knowledge systems are interconnected and complement each other, which is necessary for addressing complex global and national challenges. Demonstrating and acknowledging the value of both systems is essential for developing comprehensive and effective solutions.
27	Science diplomacy	Based on its bilateral and multilateral agreements, South Africa collaborates with other countries to address local and global issues. Science can be used to enhance such collaborations. Public trust in and appreciation of science could be increased by demonstrating and assessing how science enhances international relations.
28	Science for decision makers	Good governance – including resource allocation and policy outcomes – depends on sound decision-making. In turn, sound decision-making depends on using scientific evidence and initiatives to establish a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

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29	South Africans' relationship with science	The SAPRS survey is conducted every five years to assess how close the country is getting to the kind of society envisioned by the science engagement programme. The inaugural survey was conducted in 2022 and its results were published in December 2024. In the build-up to the next survey in 2027, the survey results dissemination activities are continuing to encourage the public to engage with the research report and to raise publicity about the next survey in 2027. The DSTI may benefit from using communication tools to informally assess how the results of the previous survey compare to how people feel today.
30	Public awareness of research institutions	Publicly funded research is largely produced by universities and science councils. Citizens should be informed about these institutions, their activities, and the ground-breaking research they have produced. This will undoubtedly improve public confidence in science institutions, scientists and science, as well as possibly positioning scientific research as an attractive career.
31	Science and youth	The next generation should be motivated to contribute to scientific advancements by inspiring young people to pursue careers in scientific research and innovation. The work of young South Africans who are doing very well in scientific research and as innovators and entrepreneurs could be exemplary and motivational to others. Participation in science fairs like the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists should be encouraged, as it provides a breeding ground for future researchers and innovators.

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