

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2025 SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN IN SCIENCE AWARDS (SAWISA)

THEME: UNPACKING STEM CAREERS: HER VOICE IN SCIENCE

UCT internal deadline: Monday, 19 May 2025, 09h00

DSTI deadline: Tuesday, 10 June 2025

Enquiries: Mbasu Mguye (mbasa.mguye@uct.ac.za)

The Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) calls for nominations for the 2025 South African Women in Science Awards (SAWiSA). These awards recognise and reward excellence by women scientists and researchers, and profile them as role models for younger women. The awards will be made to South African women citizens or permanent residents in the distinguished young woman and distinguished woman researchers' categories in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), Natural (Life and Physical) and Engineering Sciences (NES) categories, as well as in the theme category (Public Engagement with Research). Awards for students at master's and PhD level in the HSS and NES fields will be made under the DSTI Fellowship category.

THEME

The theme for the 2025 SAWiSA is adopted from the 2025 UNESCO International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGS) theme, namely, **"Unpacking STEM Careers: Her Voice in Science"**. The theme emphasises the importance of creating pathways for women's career development and leadership in STEM, while addressing systemic barriers such as funding, mentorship and workplace bias. Furthermore, the theme highlights the need for inclusive media representation to challenge gender stereotypes and amplify the contributions of women in STEM. Building on the "Her Voice in Science" theme the 2025 SAWISA will introduce a special Theme Category dedicated for Public Engagement with Research. This category will highlight and reward efforts to make scientific research more accessible and impactful for society. Moving forward, it will become a permanent part of the SAWISA award categories.

NOMINATION CRITERIA

- Any person who knows the nominee and her work well can make a nomination. The nominator should provide the motivation as required in the nomination form.
- Nominees must be South African citizens or permanent residents.
- Overall winners in the past 10 years are not eligible to be nominated in the categories in which they have previously won.

AWARD CATEGORIES

1. DISTINGUISHED WOMAN RESEARCHERS

Nominees should be established women scientists or researchers with at least five-years of postdoctoral experience and who are actively involved in research. Their research projects must have made outstanding scientific contribution to advancing science and building the knowledge base in their areas of research not necessarily aligned with the theme.

Awards will be made in the following fields as well as in any field aligned with the theme:

- Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS)
- Natural Sciences (Life and Physical) and Engineering Sciences

Adjudication criteria

Nominees will be judged on their track record of research outputs, research impact (research alignment with the decadal plan, societal and environmental Impact), professional and research experience, human capital development, contribution to women and girl's empowerment to promote gender equality and collaborations.

Value of each award

Winner: R95 000 | First runner-up: R65 000 | Second runner-up: R40 000

Required documents:

- i. **A completed and signed nomination form** ([download here](#)) containing
 - **A completed CV template** (point 4 – 15).
 - **Proof of public engagement with research** (if applicable)(point 17): List of intellectual property outputs with relevant registration numbers, or list of outputs with inclusive growth and development impact.
 - **Short profile** (point 18).
- ii. **Proof of scientific/research outputs** (optional appendix if ORCID numbers are not provided in point 6 of the form).
- iii. **Two Reference Letters**
- iv. **Nominator's motivation letter** discussing the nominee's professional competence, qualities or interests; and
- v. **A certified copy of ID.**

2. DISTINGUISHED YOUNG WOMAN RESEARCHERS

Nominees should be women under the age of 40 or turning 41 in 2025 who have PhDs and whose research projects have contributed to advancing science and building the knowledge base.

Awards will be made in the following fields as well as in any field aligned with the theme:

- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Natural (Life and Physical) and Engineering Sciences

Adjudication criteria

Nominees will be judged on their track record of research outputs, research impact (research alignment with the decadal plan, societal and environmental impact), professional and research experience, human capital development, contribution to women and girl's empowerment to promote gender equality, science engagements and collaborations.

Value of each award

Winner: R80 000 | First runner-up: R55 000 | Second runner-up: R30 000

Required documents:

- vi. **A completed and signed nomination form** ([download here](#)) containing
 - **A completed CV template** (point 4 – 15).
 - **Proof of public engagement with research** (if applicable)(point 17): List of intellectual property outputs with relevant registration numbers, or list of outputs with inclusive growth and development impact.
 - **Short profile** (point 18).
- vii. **Proof of scientific/research outputs** (optional appendix if ORCID numbers are not provided in point 6 of the form).
- viii. **Two Reference Letters**
- ix. **Nominator's motivation letter** discussing the nominee's professional competence, qualities or interests; and
- x. **A certified copy of ID.**

3. THEME: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH

The two awards under the theme will be made to a distinguished young woman researcher and established woman researcher in any field who have excelled in increasing public access to scientific knowledge through appropriate means of science communication or citizen science.

Nominees must be distinguished young women scientists or researchers with a PhD degree, **under the age of 40 or turning 41 in 2025** and who have excelled in increasing public access to scientific knowledge through appropriate means of science communication or citizen science. Distinguished woman researchers must be established scientists or researchers with **at least five years' postdoctoral experience** who has excelled in increasing public access to scientific knowledge through appropriate means of science communication or citizen science.

Adjudication criteria

Nominees will be judged on their track record of research outputs, research impact (research alignment with the decadal plan, societal and environmental impact), professional and research experience, and human capital development. Emphasis should be placed on the applicant's ability to promote public access to scientific research through one or more of the following:

- presenting their research findings to the public using any appropriate means of science communication and in a non-technical language that is accessible to laypeople;
- actively engage non-professional scientists or ordinary members of the public in scientific knowledge production and acknowledge their contributions; accordingly, and
- responding proactively to developments, phenomena, and misinformation by clarifying issues to the public using non-technical language that is accessible to laypeople through appropriate means of science communication.

Value of each award

Distinguished Young Woman Researcher: R90 000

Distinguished Woman Researcher: R100 000

4. DSTI FELLOWSHIPS

Nominees should be women under the age of 35 who are South African citizens or permanent residents; registered for full-time study or research for masters or PhD degrees at UCT, or any public university in SA; and who are high performers in the current or previous degrees.

The fellowships recognise the awardees' outstanding ability and potential in research, enhance their research experience and output, and encourage more young women to complete research degrees.

Fellowships will be awarded to:

- Six master's students: two in Natural Sciences, one in Engineering Sciences, one in HSS, one in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and one in Astronomy.
- Six PhD students: two in Natural Sciences, one in Engineering Sciences, one in HSS, one in IKS and one in Astronomy

Adjudication criteria

Applicants will be judged on the academic performance of their studies; Track Record (Research Contributions and Publications - conference presentations, research awards, patents, book chapters, student supervision); Professional and Research Experience, quality and feasibility of their proposed study/research plan and schedule; relevance of their research (aligned with the decadal plan) as per the application criteria given.

Value of the awards

R70 000 for a master's degree (x6) | R90 000 for PhD degree (x6)

Required documents:

- i. **A completed application form** ([download here](#)) containing

- **A Short profile.**
- **Letter of intent and applicant statement** which must indicate:
 - The applicant's desire to be considered for the fellowship,
 - how the applicant qualifies for the fellowship, and
 - a demonstrable need for the specialised knowledge and skills that she plans to acquire.
- ii. **Proof of research publications or outputs** (optional if ORCID numbers are not provided in point 3).
- iii. **Reference letter.** The letter must reflect the relationship of the referee with the applicant, the contact details of the referee, and highlight the following about the applicant:
 - evidence of excellence in current studies,
 - technical accomplishments and relative standing of the candidate among her peers (publications, conferences, mentoring etc.),
 - relevance of research being pursued (potential to provide solutions to immediate problems and scarcity of researchers in the field pursued),
 - her role in encouraging and supporting young women,
 - personal or professional qualities or interests that make the applicant specially qualified to receive a fellowship, and
 - any other indicators of outstanding ability.
- iv. **A letter of support from a supervisor** who knows the applicant's work. This letter should outline the applicant's suitability to receive the award, and the quality of and performance in their studies.
- v. **Full academic record.**
- vi. **Certified copies of qualifications; and**
- vii. **A certified copy of ID.**

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

UCT internal review

Applicants who want to submit their applications for **internal review** must submit complete applications by **Monday, 19 May 2025** to amanda.raman@uct.ac.za.

Direct submission to DSI

Applicants who wish to submit directly to the DSTI can submit by the deadline on **Tuesday, 10 June 2025** to sawisa@dsti.gov.za and Cc' Amanda.Raman@uct.ac.za and clearly indicate the category. Late applications will be rejected.

DOWNLOAD APPLICATION FORMS

Application Form for [Young woman & Woman Researchers](#)

Application Form for students [DSTI Fellowship](#)