

Integrity

IN SCIENCE

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science, technology
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Department:
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SACNASP
South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions
Integrity in science



DR NOMPUMELELO OBOKOH Pr.Sci.Nat.
Chief Executive Officer



AS WE WELCOME
THE NEW COUNCIL,
WE DO SO WITH
CONFIDENCE IN
ITS COLLECTIVE
EXPERTISE AND
COMMITMENT TO
ETHICAL LEADERSHIP.

STEWARDSHIP FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

The appointment of the SACNASP Council for the 2025–2029 term marks an important moment of renewal and continuity for the organisation. As SACNASP enters the implementation phase of its new five-year Strategic Plan, strong governance will be central to ensure that natural scientific professions continue to serve society with integrity, competence, and accountability.

Council's role is one of stewardship. It provides strategic oversight, safeguards ethical standards, and ensures that SACNASP remains aligned with its legislative mandate and national development priorities. This responsibility is particularly important at a time when science is increasingly called upon to inform public policy, support service delivery, and contribute to inclusive economic and social development.

This role is underpinned by strong governance structures that guide oversight, accountability, and strategic decision-making. Council induction processes were completed, committees were aligned to strategic priorities, and early engagements with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation reaffirmed a shared commitment to regulatory reform, professionalisation of the public sector, and transformation.

This edition of the newsletter reflects governance in action. It highlights progress on legislative reform, national and international engagements, and initiatives that strengthen the future scientific pipeline. Together, these efforts demonstrate how Council stewardship is enabling SACNASP to advance its mandate with clarity and purpose.

As we welcome the new Council, we do so with confidence in its collective expertise and commitment to ethical leadership. The next chapter of SACNASP's work is underway, grounded in strong governance and focused on service to society.

Warm regards,
Dr Nompumelelo Obokoh Pr.Sci.Nat.
Chief Executive Officer



GOVERNANCE IN ACTION

This edition reflects a period of renewal and forward momentum for SACNASP. As illustrated on the cover, growth in science is rarely instantaneous. It is cultivated through sound governance, thoughtful regulation, and sustained collaboration.

With a new Council in place, this newsletter highlights governance in action, from strengthening oversight structures and legislative reform, to advancing transformation, international engagement, and the development of future

scientific skills. The stories that follow demonstrate how foundational work, often less visible, enables impact across the natural scientific professions and the public sector.

Together, these developments signal a steady but deliberate path toward a more responsive, inclusive, and future-ready scientific community.

Editor's Desk
Tumiso Machete



The President of Council, Dr Mabaso (first row, centre), with the 2025-2029 Council of SACNASP

WELCOMING THE SACNASP COUNCIL 2025-2029

SACNASP formally welcomes the Council appointed for the 2025–2029 term, whose composition reflects a balance of continuity and renewal. Drawn from across the natural scientific disciplines, governance, academia, and public service, the Council brings a depth of experience aligned to SACNASP’s evolving role within the National System of Innovation.

As the highest governance structure of the organisation, Council provides strategic direction, policy oversight, and ethical leadership. Its work is central to safeguarding public trust in the natural scientific professions and ensuring that SACNASP remains a credible and responsive regulator.



The Council induction workshop held at the beginning of the Council’s term

The new Council assumes office at a pivotal time. SACNASP is implementing a new Strategic Plan, advancing amendments to its founding legislation, strengthening transformation initiatives, and expanding its international footprint. Council stewardship provides the stability and accountability required to navigate a complex operating environment while remaining focused on public interest.

Council Induction and Readiness

To support effective governance from the outset, SACNASP implemented a structured Council induction programme. This process familiarised members with the organisation's legislative framework, governance responsibilities, committee architecture, and strategic priorities.

The induction emphasised fiduciary duties, ethical oversight, and the distinction between governance and management.

It also ensured that Council committees were appropriately constituted and aligned to SACNASP's strategic objectives, enabling focused oversight and informed decision-making.

Council Structure

SACNASP's governance is exercised through Council as the highest decision-making body, responsible for setting strategic direction, policy, and overall oversight. Council is supported by the Executive Committee, which considers committee recommendations between Council meetings, as well as standing committees that oversee registration, audit and risk, information systems, human resources, professional conduct, and strategic projects. Together, these structures provide the governance architecture required to exercise effective oversight, safeguard integrity, and support the delivery of SACNASP's mandate.



The Council induction workshop held at the beginning of the Council's term





Dr Mlungisi Cele, Director-General of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation leading the DSTI-SACNASP bilateral engagement



SACNASP Management, led by the CEO, at the DSTI-SACNASP bilateral engagement

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

As part of strengthening alignment with national priorities, SACNASP engaged with the Director-General of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Mlungisi Cele, during the quarter. The engagement provided an opportunity to reflect on SACNASP's role within the National System of Innovation and to reaffirm the importance of professional regulation in building a capable, ethical, and development-oriented scientific workforce.

Discussions focused on the implementation of SACNASP's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, progress on legislative reform, professionalisation of the public sector, and transformation initiatives. The engagement reinforced the value of strong governance and regulatory certainty in ensuring that scientific expertise contributes meaningfully to development, service delivery, and innovation.

PROGRESS ON THE NATURAL SCIENTIFIC PROFESSIONS AMENDMENT BILL

The proposed amendments to the Natural Scientific Professions Act respond directly to limitations in the current legislation, including unclear definitions of professional practice, restricted regulatory authority, and limited flexibility to recognise evolving and transdisciplinary scientific work. The existing Act also constrains registration largely to higher qualification levels and contains structural ambiguities that affect governance and enforcement.

The Amendment Bill introduces clearer definitions of scientific practice and who must register, with explicit exclusions where registration is not required. It strengthens the Minister's role in gazetting fields of practice, empowers the Board to determine registration categories, competencies, and qualifications, and improves SACNASP's ability to regulate unregistered practice. The Bill also modernises the legislative structure to align with drafting standards, as well as other science and regulatory entities.

Cabinet has approved the Bill for public comment. Public participation is anticipated to commence in February 2026.

TRANSFORMATION IN MOTION

Transformation remains a core priority under SACNASP's governance framework and is closely aligned with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation's transformation mandate.

Under the SheSTEAM programme, SACNASP has moved beyond once-off engagements to institutionalise Science Clubs in quintile 1 to 3 schools located in historically under-resourced communities. These clubs provide sustained exposure to science, mentorship, and practical learning, strengthening the early pipeline into the natural scientific professions.

Governance oversight of this initiative ensures that transformation is deliberate and embedded within SACNASP's broader strategic objectives, reflecting a long-term investment in gender inclusion, equity, and future skills development.



SCIENCE FORUM SOUTH AFRICA: ADVANCING SKILLS FOR A CHANGING SCIENTIFIC LANDSCAPE

At Science Forum South Africa held in November 2025, SACNASP convened strategic discussions focused on the evolving skills requirements of the natural scientific professions. SACNASP workshoped its Future Skills Report in collaboration with Enterprises University of Pretoria, which provides evidence-based insight into the competencies required for natural scientists in a changing world of work. The report highlights the growing importance of interdisciplinary skills, digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, and ethical awareness alongside core scientific expertise.

Key outcomes from the report highlight the need for closer alignment between education, professional development, and labour market demands, as well as the role of professional bodies in supporting lifelong learning and adaptability. The report informs SACNASP's regulatory and advisory work and contributes to broader national conversations on skills development and workforce readiness.



Also at Science Forum South Africa, SACNASP and the Tshwane University of Technology's Institute for the Future of Work (IFoW) co-organised an interactive Nexus Approach Workshop, focused on addressing interconnected global challenges across water, energy, food, climate change, and health, with specific focus on South Africa and China.

The workshop was anchored by keynote inputs from Mr Imraan Patel, Deputy Director-General at the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, and Mr Chen Jingquan, Minister Counsellor for Science and Technology at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China. Their contributions emphasised the importance of integrated, cross-sectoral approaches and international collaboration in responding to complex development challenges.

A defining feature of the session was its interactive case-study format, which divided participants into small groups to work through real-world nexus challenges and propose practical, solution-oriented responses. The workshop highlighted the value of collaborative problem-solving and reinforced the role of science-policy partnerships in translating knowledge into action.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

Changsha: Strengthening Science Collaboration

SACNASP participated in the China-South Africa Young Scientists Roundtable Dialogue on Sustainable Development held in Changsha, China as part of the China-South Africa Science, Technology, and People-to-People Exchange Series. The dialogue brought together young scientists from both countries to explore collaborative responses to sustainable development challenges, with discussions focused on green innovation, digital integration, sustainable transport, agricultural modernisation, and the role of emerging technologies. SACNASP's participation reinforced South Africa's commitment to inclusive science diplomacy, professional development, and international collaboration under the DSTI-CAST Memorandum of Understanding.

Beijing and the World Science and Technology Development Forum

SACNASP participated in the World Science and Technology Development Forum (WSTDF) in Beijing, hosted by the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) under the theme AI for Science and Development. The delegation was led by the Deputy Director-General for Research, Development and Support, Mr Imraan Patel, from the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, who highlighted the role of science, innovation, and responsible AI in advancing sustainable development. SACNASP's engagement formed part of the ongoing implementation of the DSTI-CAST MoU, contributing perspectives on professional regulation, scientific integrity, and capacity-building within global science and innovation ecosystems.



Young scientists participating at the Young Scientists Dialogue





PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: SACNASP AND TUT'S INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK (IFOW)

SACNASP has formalised a strategic partnership with the Institute for the Future of Work (IFoW) at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) to strengthen future-focused skills development for natural scientists. The partnership responds to emerging workforce trends and supports the development of competencies required in a rapidly evolving science, technology, and innovation landscape.

Through this collaboration, SACNASP and IFoW will jointly design and deliver programmes that build capabilities in areas such as digital technologies, data analysis, and artificial intelligence, alongside broader professional development interventions. The partnership also enables joint conferences, workshops, and thought leadership engagements that bring together scientists, academia, industry, and policymakers to explore the future of work.

SACNASP will support regulatory enablement through its CPD programme among registered scientists, while IFoW will lead programme design, mobilisation of expertise, and the pursuit of funding opportunities. Together, the partnership strengthens SACNASP's contribution to future skills development and supports a more adaptive, capable, and forward-looking scientific workforce.

CANDIDATE MENTORING PROGRAMME: BUILDING PROFESSIONAL READINESS

SACNASP's Candidate Mentoring Programme (CMP) continues to play a central role in supporting early-career natural scientists as they transition from academic training into professional practice. The programme is designed to strengthen professional readiness, improve employability, and support candidates toward registration through structured mentorship and exposure to real-world scientific applications.

In addition to working with the voluntary associations, the mentorship programme also focuses on deepening industry-linked mentorship through collaboration with partners such as the NEMATECH Biosciences Foundation. These engagements provide candidates with practical insights into applied science, innovation, and emerging technologies, reinforcing the relevance of professional registration and ethical practice within industry contexts. This approach enables graduates to engage directly with practitioners working at the interface of science, technology, and commercialisation.

The collaboration with NEMATECH forms part of SACNASP's broader approach to integrating CMP with strategic partners across industry and research institutions, ensuring that mentoring is aligned with evolving skills needs and labour market realities. Through such engagements, CMP is moving beyond theoretical guidance to offer candidates tangible professional exposure and clearer pathways into the natural scientific professions.



Mr Bheki Hadebe (bottom right), Director of High-End Skills at DSTI, addressing graduates from the NEMATECH programme

In Memoriam

SACNASP marks with deep sadness the passing of Professor Roseanne Diab, a valued member of the SACNASP Council and Chairperson of the Strategic Projects Committee, a position she held with distinction since 2019.

During her service to SACNASP, Professor Diab made a significant contribution to advancing the Council's mandate to uphold professional standards, promote ethical scientific practice, and safeguard public interest. Her work strengthened the credibility and impact of the natural scientific professions and reinforced their role in supporting national development priorities.

As Chairperson of the Strategic Projects Committee, Professor Diab provided thoughtful and principled leadership, guiding key strategic initiatives that enhanced SACNASP's institutional effectiveness and long-term direction. Her approach to governance was characterised by integrity, insight, and a collaborative spirit, and she was widely respected for her commitment to purposeful and ethical leadership.

Professor Diab's contribution to SACNASP forms an enduring part of the organisation's governance legacy. She will be deeply missed by the Council, management, and the broader scientific community. SACNASP honours her service and extends its condolences to her family, colleagues, and peers. May her soul rest in peace.



CLOSING WORD

With the new Council in place, SACNASP moves forward with clarity and confidence. Strong governance underpins effective regulation, meaningful transformation, and credible engagement at national and international levels.

As this edition demonstrates, stewardship is already translating into action, strengthening the role of science in service of society.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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