

FACULTY OF **NATURAL SCIENCES**

Newsletter – June 2026

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Executive Dean

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1

As we conclude Semester 1, the Faculty of Natural Sciences celebrates a successful examination period made possible through the outstanding cooperation between academic and administrative staff. Their collective commitment ensured the smooth management of critical examination processes and supported student success. Congratulations to all staff and students for their dedication and achievements. We proudly acknowledge the Faculty's historic leadership in hosting the SASAE-Walter Sisulu Conference, which elevated the University's national and international profile. We extend sincere gratitude to our outgoing Heads of Department and warmly welcome Dr Noluntu Dyantyi, Dr Thembinkosi Dlaza, Dr Mametsi Maseme, and Dr Charles Kakuli. Let us maintain our pursuit of excellence as we prepare for supplementary examinations and Semester 2 with positivity, professionalism, and determination.

ADMINISTRATION

2

The Faculty continues to strengthen good governance, effective office management, and a culture of professional growth among both academic and support staff. Staff members have demonstrated commendable commitment to skills development and service excellence in support of the Faculty's strategic objectives. The Faculty congratulates Professor Jean Ruffin Mpiana Mutambayi on his promotion to Associate Professor of Statistics, a significant achievement that reflects the Faculty's commitment to academic excellence and staff development. His promotion serves as an inspiration to colleagues and students alike.

Jean Ruffin Mpiana Mutambayi Promoted to Associate Professor of Statistics



- ▶ Walter Sisulu SENEX noted promotion in June for approval by Senate.
- ▶ Professor Mutambayi specialises in Biostatistics, Applied statistics, Epidemiology and Mathematical statistics. Currently, I am working on survival analysis.
- ▶ Recent publication: Azeez, A., Osuji, G., Mutambayi, R., & Ndege, J. (2025). Machine-learning forecasting model of tuberculosis cases among children in South Africa. South African Journal of Science, 121(11/12). <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2025/16658>

3

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The provisional June 2026 examination results reflect an estimated faculty pass rate of 76.6%, with 8,555 students successfully passing their examinations. Biological and Environmental Sciences achieved the highest performance with pass rates exceeding 84%, while Mathematical Sciences and Computing performed above the faculty average. Applied Sciences recorded satisfactory results, although some practical and service modules require focused intervention. Chemical and Physical Sciences remains an area requiring additional academic support, particularly in gateway Physics and Chemistry modules. Departmental interventions, including Winter School, will further support student success.

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RESEARCH

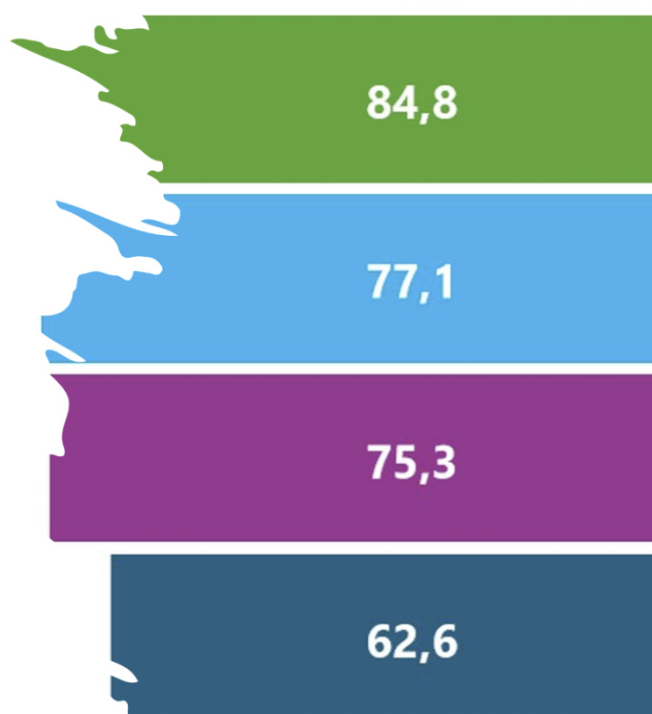
The Faculty achieved a historic milestone through the successful hosting of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE)-Walter Sisulu Conference, held from 29 June to 3 July 2026. The conference attracted nearly 600 delegates from across South Africa and several African countries, showcasing Walter Sisulu University's growing leadership in research, innovation, food security, rural development, and climate resilience. Research excellence continues to gain national and international recognition. Highlights include the appointment of Professor Michael Dare Asemoloye as Associate Editor of *Frontiers in Microbiology* and the publication of high-impact international research outputs. The Faculty also congratulates Professor Francis Dejene on his nomination to represent Walter Sisulu University in the prestigious THENSA Energy Project initiative.

PROVISIONAL JUNE 2026 EXAM RESULTS

Estimated overall pass rate of 76.6% with 8,555 passes from 11,171 students

Key Observations

- ▶ **BES (1st)** exceeded 84% and demonstrating consistent student success across most programmes.
- ▶ **MSC (2nd)** performed above the faculty average, though several advanced Mathematics and Statistics modules recorded low pass rates
- ▶ **APS (3rd)** achieved a satisfactory overall performance, but some practical and service modules recorded exceptionally low pass
- ▶ **CPS (4th)** remains the faculty's key concern area, with several Physics and Chemistry gateway modules recording pass rates below 50%
- ▶ **Winter School** intervention to be confirmed by HODs



FNS Successfully hosted National Conference on behalf of Walter Sisulu: June 29 - July 03, 2026

- ▶ Held from **29 June to 3 July 2026** in the Buffalo City Campus of Walter Sisulu (Potsdam), the Eastern Cape SASAE conference brought together leading researchers, academics, policymakers, extension practitioners, government officials, farmers, students, and development partners from all nine South African provinces and several African countries. The conference was convened under the theme **"Towards an Inclusive, Digital, and Resilient Extension Paradigm for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Positioning Agricultural Extension as a Driver of Innovation, Equity, and Sustainability in Crops, Livestock, Forestry, Game Farming, Environment, and People."** [sasae.co.za], [wsu.ac.za]
- ▶ With attendance reaching **close to 600 delegates**, the conference provided an important platform for knowledge exchange, innovation, networking, and policy dialogue on sustainable agriculture, food security, rural development, digital transformation, youth and gender inclusion, climate resilience, and agricultural extension services. [wsu.ac.za], [ecagriculture.gov.za]

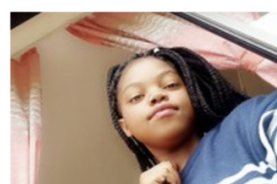


SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION
Empowering Agriculture For Generations



FNS Women Took Science Presentations To The SASAE-Walter Sisulu Conference

- ▶ **Zendy Magayiyana**: Multi-Biome Relevance for the Explanation of Potential Sustainable Agroecosystem Components
- ▶ **Zanele Adams**: Relational Analysis Prospects for Rural Economic Development: An Organic, Rainfed Cropping-Livestock Model for Baziya, Eastern Cape
- ▶ **Mbikazi Ketelo**: Climate Change Statistical Modelling for Agricultural Extension in South Africa: A Comprehensive Review
- ▶ **Amanda Tiya**: Fog Harvesting and the Conservation of Wild Edible Plants for Food Security



Gold Medal For Research: Michael Dare Asemoloye

- ▶ Appointment as **Associate Editor of Frontiers in Microbiology**
- ▶ Two high impact and internationalisation publications in June:

1. Hybrid systems for microplastic removal: linking biological and physico-chemical processes, **Separation and Purification Technology**, Volume 396, Part 2, 2026, 138055

2. Microbial and enzymatic biodegradation of synthetic plastics: mechanisms, environmental constraints, and translational limits, **Waste Management Bulletin**, Volume 4, Issue 2, 2026, 100304,



Professor Francis Dejene Nominated To represent Walter Sisulu At The THENSA Energy Project

- ▶ “On behalf of the THENSA Energy Project Team, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for your **institution's response to the project's Initial Scoping Exercise**
- ▶ We are currently finalising the participation process and **confirming the researchers who have indicated their interest** in and commitment to the project through this exercise.
- ▶ To formally proceed, we kindly request that your institution nominate the following representative(s) to participate in the project: **Prof Francis Dejene**
- ▶ Signed Participation Confirmation Letters: 30 June 2026.
- ▶ The first **project activity**, a Workshop, has been scheduled for 29-30 July 2026”. *Chistelle Venter, Director, Operations and Partnerships*



**THENSA IS A VIBRANT,
INNOVATIVE CONSORTIUM**

Celebrating 20 Years
of Innovation & Impact

Join the Journey with THENSA!



4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Faculty continues to participate in institutional events such as Famelab and expand its community impact through the development of Short Learning Programmes aimed at enhancing agricultural skills, entrepreneurship, and sustainable livelihoods. These programmes are expected to strengthen capacity building opportunities for communities, graduates, and industry partners. Planning is also progressing for Green Grow, the Faculty-led initiative focused on entrepreneurship, sustainable food production, skills development, and community empowerment. The initiative aligns with the Faculty's commitment to creating meaningful social and economic impact throughout the Eastern Cape and beyond.

**Samira Mnyaka,
First Year
Mathematical
Science and
Computing Student
Recognised by
Famelab**

- ▶ Presentation: **Statistics can be used to help predict health pandemics**
- ▶ Came in the **top three** presenters for selection of Walter Sisulu representatives at the 2026 Annual Famelab Competition.



Agrotunnel International Proposes Collaboration With FNS

- ▶ Agrotunnel International Ltd is an agribusiness and climate-smart agriculture company based in Nairobi, Kenya. The company specializes in farmer capacity development programs across Africa.
- ▶ **Focus Areas:**
 - Greenhouse farming solutions
 - Drip irrigation systems
 - Hydroponic fodder production
 - Agricultural consultancy and training
 - Agribusiness development
 - Agricultural study tours across Africa



Faculty of Natural Science Management Proposes Short Learning Programmes

🌾	1 Food Systems & Agroecology
🌍	2 Climate & Environmental Resilience
💻	3 Digital & Data Science
🔬	4 Biotechnology & Natural Products
🎓	5 Science Outreach & Education
⚙️	6 Applied Engineering Solutions
🍷	7 Health & Nutrition Systems
🏛️	8 Science Policy & Governance
🌿	9 Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS Hub)

- ▶ This initiative positions Faculty of Natural Sciences as a potential national leader in rural innovation, combining:
 - ▶ Science + IKS
 - ▶ Training + research
 - ▶ Community engagement + entrepreneurship
 - ▶ Social impact, economic development, and institutional sustainability.

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CONCLUSION

As we enter the second half of the academic year, let us continue working together with integrity, discipline, and purpose. Every success achieved by our students, staff, and departments reflects the strength of our collective effort. We encourage all members of the Faculty community to embrace Semester 2 with renewed energy, optimism, and an unwavering commitment to excellence in teaching, research, community engagement, and administration.

NOTICES

Upcoming Conferences:

Association of Young Scientists Conference (AYSC)

Theme: Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063

Dates: 13 -15 September 2026

Venue: Walter Sisulu, Mthatha Campus, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Hosts: Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), Walter Sisulu, and partners.

Conference Website: <https://aysc.org.za/> [aysc.org.za]

IPROSA Conference

Theme: The Next Seven Generations of Africa's Wellbeing

Dates: 12 -16 October 2026

Venue: Eastern Cape, South Africa (KuGompo International Convention Centre)

Host: Indigenous Professions of Southern Africa (IPROSA)

Website: <https://iprosa.org/> [iprosa.org]