Walter Sisulu
Natural Sciences

SEPTEMBER 2026 I NEWSLETTER



Executive Summary

The Faculty of Natural Sciences continued its upward trajectory during September 2026 through significant achievements in teaching and learning, research, and stakeholder engagement.

Key highlights include:

- Strong progress towards institutional teaching and learning targets.
- Positive graduation outcomes reflecting improved student success and throughput.
- Sustained growth in research productivity across all departments.
- Increased scholarly contributions from early-career academics.
- Successful hosting of three major scientific conferences and research events.
- Expanded provincial and international partnerships.
- International research recognition through a prestigious grant awarded to the Centre for Global Change.

Teaching and Learning

The Faculty maintained an intensive academic programme throughout September to ensure successful completion of teaching, assessment, moderation, and examination preparation activities.

The September graduation results provided encouraging confirmation that interventions aimed at improving student success continue to yield positive outcomes. Improved qualification completion rates and student throughput (Figure 1, Table 1) demonstrate the effectiveness of collaborative efforts among academic departments, support staff, tutors, mentors, and faculty leadership.

These results strengthen confidence that the Faculty is well positioned to achieve its medium-term target of exceeding 80% in both pass rates and student throughput rates. Continued focus on academic excellence, student support, and quality assurance remains central to our mission.

Figure 1: Combined 2026 Graduates

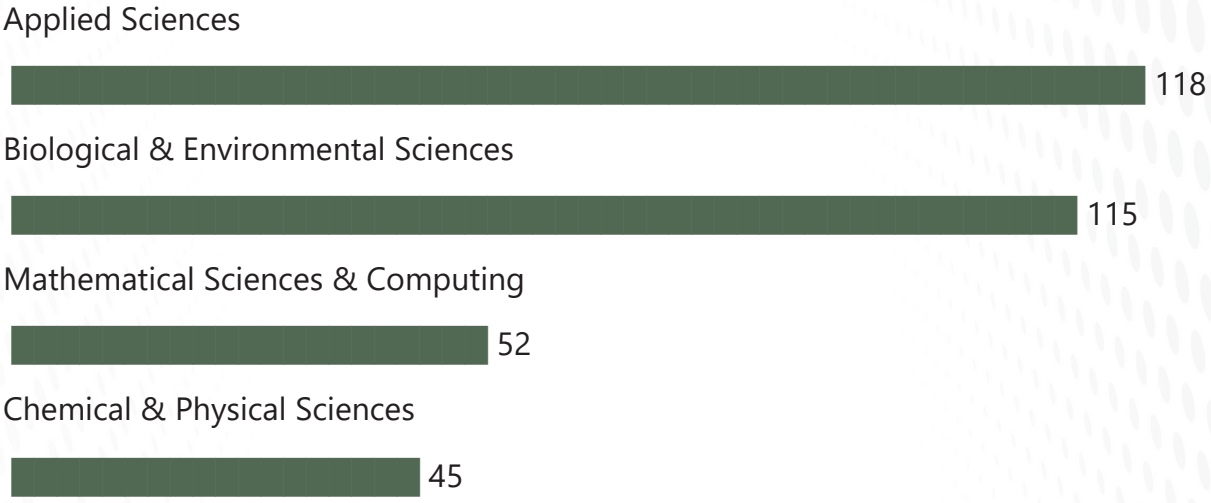


Table 1: Highest-Producing Qualifications in 2026

Qualification	Total Graduates
Dip Analytical Chemistry (including ECP)	76
BSc Environmental Studies (including ECP)	39
BSc Biological Sciences (including ECP)	32
Dip Consumer Science Food & Nutrition (ECP)	38
BSc Pest Management (including ECP)	31
BSc Computer Science (including ECP)	18
BSc Mathematics (including ECP)	17
BSc Chemistry (including ECP)	19
BSc Physics (including ECP)	16

Research and Innovation

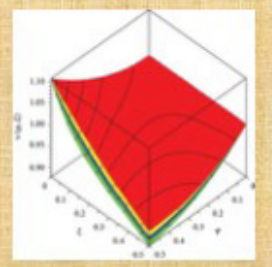
Research activity across the Faculty continues to grow, reflecting a vibrant and expanding culture of scholarship and innovation. While experienced researchers remain prominent contributors to publication outputs, an encouraging trend has been the increasing participation of young and emerging academics in research publication and supervision activities.

Research outputs from the Faculty now span a broad spectrum of disciplines including Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Environmental Sciences, Physics, Mathematics, Water Research, Climate Change, Biodiversity Conservation, and Applied Sciences. The diversity of publication outlets and DHET-accredited journals reflects both the quality and relevance of research being undertaken within the Faculty.

This growing research momentum is creating new opportunities for postgraduate students and strengthening the Faculty's national and international academic standing.

Rahul Shukla
Gold Medal for Research: September 2026





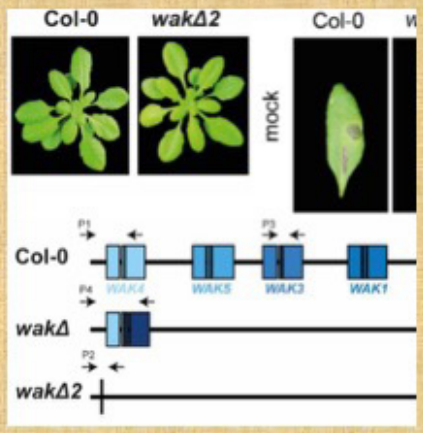
- Patel, P., & Shukla, R. (2026). A double inertial extragradient method for finite families of mappings and its application to variational inequalities. Korean Journal of Mathematics, 34(3), 409–422.
- Anjana, Mani, N., & Shukla, R. (2026). On relation theoretic common fixed point theorems for pair of mappings endowed with a weakly closed relation. Nonlinear Functional Analysis and Applications, 31(3), 979–996. https://doi.org/10.22771/NFAA.2026.31.03.17
- Mani, N., Beniwal, S., & Shukla, R. (2026). Some remarks on "On enriched Suzuki mappings in Hadamard spaces" [Mathematics 2024, 12(1), 157]. Journal of Mathematical Sciences. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10958-026-08632-8
- Shukla S, Dubey N, Bairagi A, Shukla R. A generalization of the Banach contraction principle in fuzzy metric spaces and its application to the analysis of RLC circuits. Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems: Applications in Engineering and Technology. 2026;0(0). doi:10.1177/18758967261492003



Michael Osemoloye Silver Medal for Research: September 2026

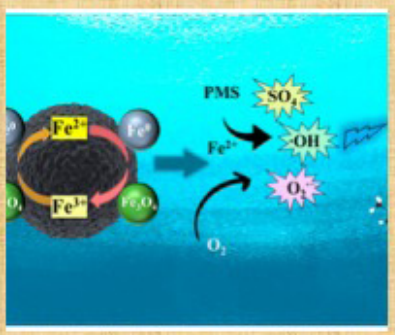
- Asemoloye, M. D., & Olowe, O. M. (2026). Role of cell wall-associated kinases in plant development and defense responses. Molecular Biology Reports, 53(1), 1507. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11033-026-12695-w
- Asemoloye, M. D., & Babalola, O. O. (2026). From traits to field performance: A mechanistically informed framework for designing and evaluating synthetic microbial communities in sustainable agriculture. Rhizosphere, Article 101491. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rhisph.2026.101491

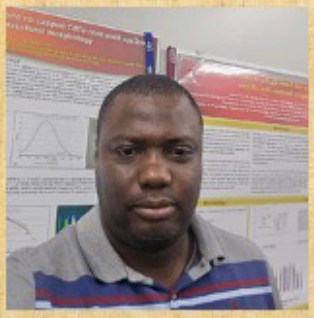










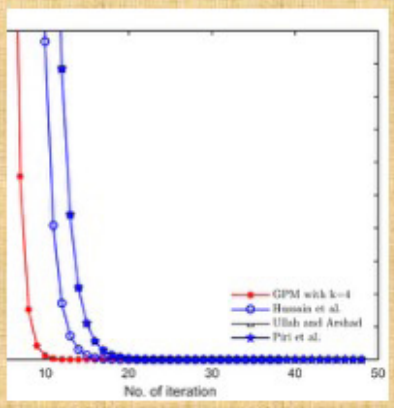


Olamide Daramola Bronze Medal for Research: September 2026

- Interfacial peroxydisulfate activation over graphene nanoplatelet-integrated polymeric iron phthalocyanine for petroleum hydrocarbon degradation in crude-oil-contaminated water. Chemical Engineering Journal Advances, Volume 27, 2026, 101403, ISSN 2666-8211, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ceja.2026.101403.







Rekha Panicker Bronze Medal for Research: September 2026

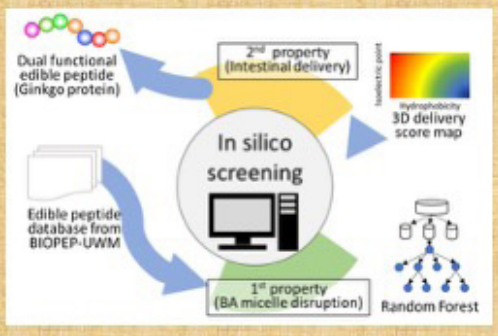
- Deepa Vijayasenan Rekha Panicker, Rahul Shukla. Fixed-Point Approximation via GPM Iteration for G-Monotone Nonexpansive Mappings on Directed Graphs. Asia Pacific Journal of Mathematics.

Njabulo Gumede Bronze Medal for Research: September 2026

- In silico screening and prioritization of bioactive alkaloids from Nauclea latifolia as potential ROCK 2- binding compounds for cardiovascular disease drug discovery.







Lwando Matiso Bronze Medal for Research: September 2026

- Smallholder Farmers' Perceptions of Climate Change in the O.R. Tambo District Municipality: Challenges, Adaptation, and Resilience









Major Research Events

ASSAf Young Scientists Conference 2026

Faculty researchers and students participated actively in the ASSAf Young Scientists Conference, which highlighted innovative research and innovation in water security, sanitation, sustainability, and climate resilience. The event provided a valuable platform for emerging scientists to engage with national research priorities



Faculty Research Day 2026

The annual Faculty Research Day highlighted the depth and quality of research across all departments. Participation from Honours, Master's and Doctoral students demonstrated a healthy and expanding postgraduate research pipeline, while interdisciplinary presentations highlighted the Faculty's growing research capacity.



SACI Eastern Cape Annual Seminar

The Faculty successfully hosted the South African Chemical Institute (SACI) Eastern Cape Annual Seminar, bringing together postgraduate Chemistry students and academics from the four universities in the Eastern Cape offering Chemistry programmes. The seminar strengthened scientific collaboration and promoted postgraduate research excellence within the province.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

The Faculty continues to strengthen its contribution to regional development through strategic engagement and partnerships.

A notable achievement during September was participation in the Provincial Agriculture PSET Articulation Conference. This initiative brought together higher education institutions, government departments, and industry stakeholders to advance integrated approaches to agricultural development and skills training.

The Faculty Dean was appointed to represent Walter Sisulu University on a strategic provincial committee that will support collaboration between higher education, government, and the private sector. This appointment positions the University to make a meaningful contribution to future agricultural innovation and workforce development initiatives.



International Recognition

The Centre for Global Change (CGC) achieved a significant milestone through the successful award of funding from the Australia-Africa Universities Network (AAUN). The funded project, titled: **"Community Supported Approach to Sustainability: Building Local Capacity to Sustain Rural Water Infrastructure in Remote Communities"** will strengthen international collaboration while addressing critical challenges related to rural water security and community development. This achievement enhances the Faculty's international visibility and demonstrates the global relevance of research being conducted at Walter Sisulu University.



Congratulations

The Faculty extends its sincere congratulations to:

- Academic staff for their commitment to teaching excellence, supervision, research, and innovation.
- Administrative and support staff for their professionalism and essential contribution to Faculty operations.
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students for their academic and research achievements.
- Research centres and departments for their continued growth in scholarly outputs.
- Strategic partners and stakeholders for their ongoing support and collaboration.

These collective achievements continue to strengthen the Faculty's reputation as a centre of excellence in science, research, and societal impact.

Upcoming Events and Notices

World Food Day 2026

Date: 16 October 2026; 10H00-13H00
Venue: NMD Auditorium, Mthatha Campus

The Faculty will host World Food Day 2026 under the theme:

"Food Futures: Sustainable Solutions for People, Planet and Prosperity."

The event will bring together researchers, students, government representatives, industry partners and community stakeholders to explore innovative solutions for sustainable food systems.

Looking Ahead

As the academic year progresses, the Faculty remains committed to:

- Enhancing student success and graduation outcomes.
- Increasing research productivity and impact.
- Expanding postgraduate research capacity.
- Strengthening national and international partnerships.
- Advancing meaningful community engagement.

Through continued collaboration, innovation and excellence, the Faculty of Natural Sciences remains well positioned to achieve its strategic objectives and contribute to the transformation of society through science.



iYunivesithi
Walter Sisulu

www.wsu.ac.za