

4. Project Description

Science Olympiad competitions are used internationally as a means of promoting science and excellence in science. SAASTA's Science Olympiad is not only able to contribute towards excellence in science, but has huge potential in heightening participation levels of previously excluded groups and simultaneously, building their capability in the sciences.

The SAASTA's National Science Olympiad, is a project that was initially established for grade 12 learners with the objective of promoting Physical Science. Now in its 45th year, the competition continues to be one of SAASTA's flagship projects. The project is mainly funded out of SAASTA's core funding. However, previously sponsors made a significant impact in the project, especially in the organisation of the Award function and the sponsoring of the four learners to attend the London International Youth Science Forum in July/August each year.

Target:

The project offers learners in grades 10-12 an exciting opportunity to compete in the science arena with fellow learners from across all the nine provinces and SADC, such as Namibia and Lesotho. The competition comprises an annual examination in science, and top learners and top schools stand a chance to win exciting prizes. The top national performers also stand a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to the London International Youth Science Forum. The Olympiad currently comprises two sections/streams, Physical Science (Physics and Chemistry) and Biology. Learners can choose to write either Physical Science or Biology.

The project also target Physical Science and Natural Science educators.

The main aim of the National Science Week is to encourage excellence in science education, yet also stimulates interest in the sciences, and seeks to inspire young people to consider careers in science, engineering and technology.

The following were identified as the objectives of the project:

- To identify and nurture talent towards Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) careers;
- To encourage Grade 10-12 learners to study science at school and pursue careers in science fields;
- To recognize and honour excellence in the sciences; and
- To expose learners to the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) fields, including careers and current trends.

The programme is rolled-out in five phases as follows:

Phase 1: Learners participate through a competition (Examination)

Phase 2: Top 100 learners from different categories attend a “Science Focus Week” in Pretoria

Phase 3: Award giving ceremony for top learners and schools held in Pretoria

Phase 4: Top four learners from different categories attend an international festival: “London International Youth Science Forum” for two weeks in London.

Phase 5: Science Camps for learners from disadvantaged communities/schools who showed potential in Science is held.