



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemarkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

25 November 2025

UCT at the forefront as NSTF introduces Research Software Awards

The University of Cape Town's [eResearch Centre](#) (UCT eResearch) has played a leading role in shaping national recognition for research software, inspiring the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), in partnership with the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR), to launch a new award category: the Research Software Awards.

Introduced as one of 16 categories in the prestigious NSTF-South32 Awards, the new category recognises outstanding contributions to science, engineering, technology (SET) and innovation through the development, extension or maintenance of research software that enables research in SA.

This announcement was made during the Research Software Symposium on 4 November 2025, under the theme *Research Workflows, Code & Software: Critical Pillars of the South African Digital and Open Research Infrastructure*. The new category represents a significant step toward acknowledging the role of research software and its creators as critical enablers of scientific discovery and innovation.

"UCT eResearch is honoured to have hosted the inaugural Research Software Symposium and the launch of the new award," said Professor Mattia Vaccari, director of UCT eResearch. "The strong participation from across disciplines highlights a growing national community of research software stakeholders. Partnering with the NSTF and SADiLaR to launch the award at this gathering helps raise awareness of research software as vital infrastructure and is expected to encourage nominations in the 2025/2026 NSTF-South32 Awards cycle."

The Research Software Awards celebrate individuals or teams who have developed, maintained or extended research software that has directly supported research in SA. Two sub-categories will be awarded:

- **Research Software** – recognising contributions that advance research in any scientific field, including humanities and social sciences
- **NSTF-SADiLaR Research Software: Human Language Technologies (HLT)** – recognising software that processes, understands or analyses human language in written, spoken or signed form in the South African context.

The awards acknowledge diverse contributors to research software, from postgraduate students and researchers to research software engineers, computational scientists, data scientists and digital humanists, while promoting best practices in openness, sustainability and collaboration.

SADiLaR supports the new award category as part of its national mandate under the South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap (SARIR) to strengthen digital research infrastructure and promote the reuse and sustainability of digital research assets. SADiLaR's funding enables the launch of the award for the 2025/2026 NSTF-South32 Awards cycle.

Professor Langa Khumalo, chief director of SADiLaR, said: "Human Language Technologies are central to digital transformation in SA. Through this award, we celebrate the ingenuity and collaborative spirit of our research software community, from the sciences to the humanities, and reinforce the importance of sustainable, locally relevant innovation."

The UCT eResearch Centre, the South African partner of the Software Sustainability Institute's 2026 edition of the International Research Software Engineering Survey, played a leading role in conceptualising the [award criteria](#).

The Research Software Awards reflect the growing recognition that sustainable and well-engineered research software is essential for transparency, reproducibility and long-term accessibility in research. This initiative aligns with national priorities under the Decadal Plan for Science, Technology and Innovation (2022–2032) of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), and with international efforts to strengthen digital research infrastructure.

"Research software is the invisible infrastructure that drives discovery across all fields of science and scholarship," said Jansie Niehaus, executive director of the NSTF. "These awards will shine a light on the often-unseen contributions of software developers and researchers whose work underpins SA's innovation ecosystem."

Nominations for the NSTF-South32 Awards opened on 20 November 2025, and winners will be announced at the annual awards ceremony planned for July 2026. By recognising excellence in research software development, the initiative aims to strengthen SA's emerging research software community of practice and ensure continued alignment with global developments in open science, digital research infrastructure and innovation.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Ridovhona Mbulaheni

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 2333
Cell: (064) 905 3807
Email: ridovhona.mbulaheni@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za