

EWSETA ramps up bursary funding for pioneering transformative research in the energy and water sector

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Earlier this year, the [Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority \(EWSETA\)](#) entered into an agreement with the South African Institute for Advanced Materials Chemistry (SAIAMC), an institution nestled within the University of the Western Cape. This partnership has ushered in new opportunities for postgraduate students immersed in the dynamic fields of energy and water-related studies.



[Photo by Pxabay](#)

With a strong commitment to fostering innovation and excellence, EWSETA extended its bursary funding to a select group of eight students, each pursuing diverse postgraduate degrees in energy and water disciplines. These aspiring scholars are pioneering transformative research, set to effect meaningful change in their fields.

Under the guidance of Professor Bernard Bladergroen, deputy director of SAIAMC and the mentor and leader of both the Energy Storage Innovation Laboratory and Fluid Treatment Centre, there is a sense of purpose and excitement amongst the students who all expressed their gratitude for the life-changing opportunities that EWSETA's funding has afforded them.

They expressed that their shared vision revolves around initiating research that will ultimately solve real-life challenges around access to clean water and energy. The scholars range from one honours degree in computer science dealing with the development of a cell phone application that processed thermal energy storage data, two master's degrees dealing with electrode development for energy storage and water purification, two PhD degrees in catalyst development for the efficient production of green hydrogen and one PhD researching novel wastewater treatment technology.

EWSETA also supports two post-doctoral students who are raising the bar when it comes to scientific expertise and supervision. One of the PhD students developed a shear-enhanced flotation technology, a primary wastewater treatment technology capable of removing 99.7% of suspended solids from winery wastewater in seconds, bringing tangible benefits

to local communities and the nation.

The awareness that their innovative work will serve as a knowledge source for future generations resonates deeply with these candidates. They take pride in their pivotal roles as trailblazers, crafting solutions to critical challenges that confront our country.

Additionally, there is an entrepreneurial spirit that is infused in these researchers. These scholars recognise the importance of harnessing the knowledge they gain to nurture entrepreneurial aspirations, aligning with South Africa's emphasis on entrepreneurship as a potent weapon against unemployment.

Professor Bladergroen, a fervent advocate for research with real-world impact, emphasised that research should extend beyond the realms of academia. He underscored: "I am a firm believer in working with industry and 90% of our research is done in conjunction with industry so that the research findings and outcomes will be meaningful and present possible solutions to real problems encountered."

His unwavering commitment to engaging with industry and producing research outcomes that address tangible problems aligns effortlessly with the ethos of EWSETA.

The mandate of EWSETA transcends skills development; it extends to championing projects and programmes that catalyse transformative change in the energy and water sector. Mpho Mookapele, EWSETA's visionary CEO, expressed: "While our primary responsibility is to foster skills development in the energy and water sector through interventions such as bursaries, it is equally important our funding is strategically targeted to tackle the sector's challenges head-on. This means greater focus on research and innovation, as it is through robust programmes like this one that impactful solutions emerge. The support we have offered to SAIAMC epitomizes this approach."

In the synergy between EWSETA, the pioneering students, and the visionary professors, a profound narrative of impact and innovation unfolds. The future of energy and water in South Africa is being meticulously shaped by the hands of those who dare to dream and, with the support of EWSETA, turn those dreams into reality.

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