

GUIDELINES FOR EDSA-SAC PRESTIGE AWARD 2026

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1. Introduction

The EDSA-SAC aims to recognise students who contribute to the mission and objectives of the UFS and its DSA, through innovation, community service excellence, and/or sustained exceptional performance in an area or areas beneficial to the UFS and its strategic objectives.

The EDSA-SAC aligns closely with the UFS's Vision 130, reflecting the university's commitment to academic excellence, innovation, sustainability, societal impact and inclusivity. Vision 130 aspires to position UFS as a research-led, student-centred and regionally engaged institution producing globally competitive graduates.

These awards celebrate students whose achievements embody the pillars of Vision 130. By recognising individuals who excel in academics, leadership and community service, the awards amplify the university's dedication to shaping graduates who are not only globally competitive but also deeply rooted in addressing regional and national challenges.

2. General Guidelines

- 1.1** All applications for the different award categories will be made online.
- 1.2** The advertising will be done online
- 1.3** Entries that do not adhere to all the requirements will not be considered.
- 1.4** Late entries will not be accepted.
- 1.5** The awards recognise excellence. Therefore, applicants must motivate their extraordinary achievements/projects/services sufficiently to convince the panel that their departmental category should be awarded.
- 1.6** Departmental awards must have been recognised at a departmental level. The awards selection team defines such recognition at an awards ceremony, through the issuing of certificates or a token of appreciation. The process of recognition must be completed before the date of the EDSA-SAC (departments are required to submit proof of recognition).
- 1.7** Awards are recognized institutionally across all campuses, not individually by location. Please ensure no campus-specific categories are created by Departments. For categories shared by two Heads of Department, joint consultation is required to ensure that only one submission is submitted. (Multicampus Model)
- 1.8** Team awards will be led by one submission, and only one person may accept a team award.
- 1.9** DSA personnel will not be involved in panel evaluations and will not influence the results.
- 1.10** A selection panel will be composed at the discretion of the EDSA-SAC. This panel will select all award winners.
- 1.11** Whilst the selection panel assesses every application received, the panel is unable to provide feedback on all applications. Applicants should consider their submission unsuccessful should they not hear from the panel within a month of the closing date for submission. However, approved submissions will be notified within 21 days after the selection panel has met.

1.12 The EDSA-SAC reserves the right not to award a category.

3. Standard Excellence Awards

Categories for all standard awards will be provided to the selection panel by the Heads of the Departments. The selection panel will receive the categories from the various departments, adjudicate, and make recommendations to the EDSA-SAC. The following units will determine their respective criteria. These departments include:

- KovsieSport, Arts & Culture,
- Housing and Residence Affairs - Residence Life and Student Communities,
- Student Life (Career Office, Food Environment, Leadership, Kovsie X, Access, Peer Mentors, Kovsie ACT),
- Institutional Student Governance,
- Health and Wellness Centre (Student Development and Counselling, Kovsie Health, Social Work, HIV),
- Executive Director: Student Affairs (Social Support Office, Student Entrepreneurship), and
- Academic Support (Centre for Teaching and Learning).

NB – Departments that have no sub-departments must submit a maximum of three categories. However, departments that do have sub-departments may submit a maximum of four categories for consideration.

2.1 Departmental Criteria

To guide departmental submissions, the following must be considered:

- For a category to be awarded, it must provide evidence to uphold the values listed below.
- For each category, the motivation must include three of the five values as outlined in the table below.

	Values	Departmental Recognition	EDSA Recognition
1.	Innovation & Impact	Demonstrated impact of the student’s work/participation that has contributed to the development of the UFS and a local community (South Africa).	Demonstrated African and global societal impact of an activity.

		Team member participating in a team activity in the Free State province or South Africa.	Team member in a national activity, who plays a leadership role in the team.
2.	Sustainability	Sustainability programs that influence/impact the UFS and a local community.	Sustainability programs that address Sustainable Development Goals and have evidence of global impact.
3.	Excellence	All individual award winners must maintain a good academic average.	All award winners must maintain a good academic average of no less than 65% at the point of submission.
4.	Care	An emphasis on well-being and happiness. Evidence of demonstrated care to the UFS and a local community (SA).	Evidence of demonstrated care to the global community.
5.	Social Justice	Demonstrated evidence for efforts of social justice at UFS. This relates to inclusiveness, the reduction of inequality, and the creation of opportunities and pathways out of poverty and dispossession.	Demonstrated evidence for assisting the university with its transformation objectives.

4. EDSA-SAC Student of the Year 2026

This award is presented to a student who has exhibited a strong commitment to the UFS in multiple areas of campus life. The Student of the Year winner is recognised for their academic excellence, leadership, contributions to their community, and exceptional achievements during their time at UFS.

3.1 Global Citizenship

Applications must contain details of a minimum of two of the criteria mentioned below:

- a) Demonstrated impact on public policy or debate.
- b) Evidence of activities that contribute to shaping the national or international conversation around research, public policy or societal change.
- c) Evidence of community outreach, including fundraising, or coordinated programmes or activities which enhance the reputation and profile of the university.
- d) Evidence of the sustainable impact of a project/intervention on all stakeholders. However, evidence must highlight the impact created for the community the project is aimed at.
- e) Evidence of national and/or international sport, arts and culture achievements.

3.2 Community Engagement & Leadership

Applications must contain details of a minimum of two of the criteria mentioned below:

- a) A student who has been selected by their peers to assume leadership positions in their own area. The recipient will have exhibited growth and development as a leader and been involved in campus and community organisations.
- b) A student whose work and/or service has led to positive, measurable change for a UFS campus and/or UFS community. Their work may include actively contributing to a cause that improves the lives of others.
- c) A student who has created a positive, measurable impact on a UFS campus and/or in a UFS community. This impact should embody the UFS values of innovation, collaboration, scholarship, respect, safety, diversity, integrity, inclusion and pride in the institution.
- d) A student who has shown service in a variety of agencies, or demonstrated exemplary service to one organisation, and holds a consistent history of service to others within the UFS and/or UFS communities.

3.3 Academia

Applicants must:

- a) Maintain a good academic record with an average of 65%.
- b) In addition, the student may have published research or participated in professional organisations.

3.4 Transformation

Applications must contain evidence of the criteria mentioned below:

An innovative intervention that has led to a demonstrable change in the institutional culture of the university, faculty or department in respect of the following areas:

- a) A student who has demonstrable evidence for efforts of social justice at UFS.
- b) A student who can demonstrate how they have assisted the university with its transformation objectives.

5. The Selection Panel

The selection panel for the EDSA-SAC lies at the discretion of the EDSA-SAC, Dr Temba Hlasho. Below are the 2026 panel members:

Dr Pieter du Toit	Convocation (Chairperson)
Teboho Manchu	Vice principal of Kovsie Support Services
Thandeka Mosholi	Faculty of Education
Zingile Alfred Dingani	Department of Education
Kathleen Emily Verway	Former Chairperson of the Kovsie Alumni Trust
Patience Nokuzola Thamae	Department of Sport, Arts, Culture & Recreation
Pule Samuel Molalenyane	Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

6. Timelines

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION SCHEDULE	
Finalisation for the awards guidelines by the project team	10 February 2026
Engagement with the newly appointed panel regarding the EDSA-SAC Prestige Awards guidelines and framework	14 March 2026
EDSA-SAC Prestige Awards Unit Presentation	22 April 2026 @ 08:00
Applications open: <i>Online submissions commence</i>	25 May 2026 @ 08:00

Applications close: <i>Online submissions conclude</i>	3 July 2026 @ 23:59
PROCESSING AND EVALUATION SCHEDULE	
Meeting of the panel for category submissions	31 July 2026
Feedback on approved categories	18 August 2026
Logistical arrangements for awards	Ongoing
Submission of awardees for approved categories	18 September 2026
Preparation of the final list of categories and awardees	20 September 2026
Finalists are informed timeously of the awards ceremony	23 September 2026
PRESTIGE AWARDS FUNCTION	23 October 2026

END.