



Successful Gen S Youth Programme takes place in Durban

August 2026

The South African Medical Research Council's (SAMRC) Generation Science (Gen S) Youth Job Shadow programme took place in Durban from 07 – 10 July. Twenty-five eager Grade 11 learners gathered at the SAMRC Durban offices and participated in an immersive programme focused on providing hands-on experience on the various science careers available at the SAMRC.

The cohort of learners consisted of top achieving learners interested in the science and mathematical fields from schools in Chesterville, Durban, Umlazi and children of SAMRC staff. The comprehensive four-day long programme saw learners engage with the Biostatistics Research Unit, Health Systems Research Unit, HIV and other Infectious Diseases Unit (HIDRU), the Malaria Research Group and the South African Population Research Infrastructure Network (SAPRIN).

This year marked five years since the inception of the Gen S programme by the SAMRC's Corporate Marketing and Communication unit.

SAPRIN continued to play a leading role in coordinating Gen S Durban. Through SAPRIN's continued partnership with the Africa Health Research Institute (AHRI), a third consecutive year of learner visits to a world-class laboratory was facilitated. AHRI is one of seven Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) node's in the SAPRIN network.

On day one learners were given an overview of the SAMRC, followed by a career panel session that allowed learners the space to interact with a doctor, health economist, statistician, medical technologist and actuarial scientist. This was followed by a session introducing learners to the world of Biostatistics through various stimulating and fun activities.

The first day culminated in motivational talks from the third placed matric learner in KwaZulu-Natal, Cayden Packreeappen of Verulam Secondary and tenth placed KZN learner, Hafsa Mansab from Ridge Park College.



The 2026 cohort of Gen S learners: Durban edition



Cayden and Hafsa participated in the Durban edition of Gen S in 2024. Hafsa is currently studying medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Nelson Mandela School of Medicine. Cayden is pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering at UKZN. Both top achievers spoke about their journeys in producing excellent results and the path to choosing their respective courses of study.

On 8 July learners visited the AHRI laboratories and the UKZN Nelson Mandela School of Medicine based in Umbilo, Durban. At AHRI learners were exposed to numerous scientists and taken for a walk about through various laboratories. Learners participated in mock experiments and watched simulations on microscopes and other laboratory equipment.

Learners were captivated by the Medical School's Skills Laboratory where they saw dummies, anatomical models and mock hospital gear.

On the third day learners visited HIDRU's Verulam and Phoenix Clinical Research Sites. Here HIDRU staff explained how clinical trials are conducted while showing learners the facilities and giving them an opportunity to engage with a wide range of staff. Learners also conducted mock experiments with the pharmacists and medical technologists. The day culminated in a viewing of short films produced by youth in SAPRIN's C-SHARP HDSS node.

On the last day of Gen S Durban, 10 July, learners visited the Malaria Research Group's insectary. Learners were fascinated by the presentation and practical demonstrations as well as microscope viewings. They had numerous questions and engaged at length with the unit's Specialist Scientist.

Learners also had the opportunity to participate in the UThingo Wellbeing Adolescent Study focus group. The programme culminated in a certificate ceremony for all participating learners.

"Generation Science is a powerful platform to help build the next generation of scientists. The programme is aligned with SAPRIN's values of collaboration, accessibility and enablement. We hope that the Gen S experience sparks scientific curiosity and empowers youth to explore careers in science and research," said Mrs Roopa Moodley, SAPRIN Public Relations Manager.