



ADVERTISEMENT

SALT Telescope Operator

Contract type: Permanent

Job Level: Junior

Work Location: Cape Town, Western Cape

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is established by an Act of Parliament and mandated to contribute to national development by supporting, promoting and advancing research and human capacity development, through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including humanities, social sciences and indigenous knowledge; and supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with, science. The NRF is a well-established organisation that is highly networked within the knowledge system, nationally and internationally. It is the principal organisation responsible for promoting the national research enterprise and is the primary public funder of postgraduate students and researchers and provider of research infrastructure in the country. It has well-developed, best practice research evaluation and support systems.

The South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) is the National Facility for Optical and Infrared Astronomy of the National Research Foundation (NRF). Its headquarters are in Cape Town, while its telescopes are at Sutherland in the semi-arid Northern Cape. Distributed between the two sites, SAAO employs roughly 130 people, many of them scientists and engineers, and is contracted to operate the 10-m Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), on behalf of the international SALT Foundation. SAAO is the premier optical/infrared research facility on the African continent, with global research and outreach collaborations and contributing human capacity development for South Africa. Research focus areas include extragalactic astronomy, time domain astrophysics, planetary astronomy and instrumentation development.

We require a Telescope Operator to support night-time astronomical operations of SALT and to help improve telescope performance, either via software development or through technical work.

Purpose: Supporting the night time astronomical operations of SALT in Sutherland.

Key Responsibilities:

- * Operate the telescope during night-time astronomical operations of SALT in Sutherland
- * Trouble-shoot technical issues with the astronomer on duty and SALT technical team
- * Ensure the delivery of high image quality by performing mirror alignment and continuous monitoring
- * Communicate with the astronomer on duty, SALT astronomy and technical teams
- * Assist with tasks related to the technical operations of the telescope
- * Provide input to SALT projects and document procedures
- * Day duty work focused on supporting SALT operations teams for example through software development or technical work

Key Requirements:

Qualification:

BSc in Astronomy or related field.

Experience:

A minimum of 2 years' work experience, ideally in a related field.

Knowledge:

Experience with computers (Windows and/or Linux systems)

Additional Notes:

DESIRABLE ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL, WORK EXPERIENCE AND PERSONAL QUALITIES:

Strong preference will be given to candidates with proven work experience in Optical or Near-Infrared Astronomy.

Ability to work on their own and as part of a team.

Excellent written and oral communication skills in English.

Interest in PR and outreach, using social media or otherwise, is also an asset.

A willingness to work both day and night shifts.

Proven aptitude to understand complex systems and to communicate clearly and effectively.

Strong motivation and commitment to ensuring SALT produces the best possible results.

Can work efficiently at night, under time pressure.

Real-time problem solving and decision-making skills are essential.

Technical skills to benefit the team as well as a keen interest in Astronomy will be an advantage.

A code EB driver's license will be a strong advantage.

Information:

The website www.nrf.ac.za provides more details on the NRF initiatives and activities.

Applications:

Applicants should submit a comprehensive CV by logging to <https://ess.nrf.ac.za/Account/Recruitment> and apply online. Applications should be accompanied by a letter of motivation indicating the applicant's suitability for the position. The names and contact details of at least three referees should be provided.

Closing Date: 18 March 2026

The NRF offers a challenging career and competitive remuneration package which is commensurate with qualifications and experience. The NRF is committed to employment equity and redress and the appointment to the position will be made in line with the NRF Employment Equity Plan.

The NRF reserves the right not to make an appointment.

Correspondence will be sent to short-listed candidates only