

SNAP Newsletter August 2025

SNAP stands for VUW- Hub for Simulation, Numerical methods, Analytics and Programming and is for anyone who uses computers/software in their research.

Greetings from the SNAP planning committee. We hope you are look forward to the mid trimester break. Welcome to our irregularly posted newsletter! It has been a while since a SNAP group e-mail has gone out. In this newsletter, we update you on some of the activities that SNAP has been involved with this term (and even earlier this year). We are gearing up for more in-person activities, and there is a great line-up of events coming up. We are also especially keen to hear your ideas and input, so feel free to contact us at our new dedicated e-mail address at snap@vuw.ac.nz. We now have a dedicated email address for students to contact SNAP at snap-students@vuw.ac.nz.

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Web-site

We are updating the SNAP website regularly at: <https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/>

Check out our blog posts and Champions on the about-us page. See below as we are looking for some great images and graphics to showcase what SNAP members do.

Recent Events: See what SNAP has been up to ...

There have been a range of recent events linked with SNAP, and more that have been of interest to our community. Our events are advertised through the SNAP e-mail list, and appear on the VUW libcal search under the "Victoria Development" calendar.

20 February: Introduction to Reproducible Research

Daniel Wrench (School of Chemical and Physical Sciences) and Richard Littauer (Engineering and Computer Science) led a hands-on workshop focused on best practices for reproducible research. With about 25 postgraduate attendees from across science, engineering, and even linguistics, the workshop covered essential topics including repository structuring, version control via GitHub, and managing environments.

1 April: SNAP Discord Launch In response to enthusiastic feedback following recent workshops, SNAP launched a dedicated Discord server to provide ongoing community

support. The goal is to create an informal space for students, early career researchers, and staff to ask questions, share tools, and connect over shared tech interests.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_april_discord/

16 April: Annual SNAP Workshop

Our flagship event of the year, the SNAP Annual Workshop, took place on April 16, bringing together over 35 staff and postgraduate students to share how software and modeling tools are used across VUW. Talks covered topics from supercomputing and data storage to coding tools and teaching strategies, with demonstrations of Rcpp, Globus, OpenRefine, and FEniCS. The day concluded with lively breakout sessions that ran well over time, generating ideas for future SNAP activities and ways to strengthen our community.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_april_workshop/

15 May: LaTeX Workshop

Angela Xue and Richard Littauer, postgraduate students from the School of Chemical and Physical Sciences and the School of Engineering and Computer Science, hosted a hands-on LaTeX workshop for early-career researchers. The session introduced participants to the powerful document preparation system used across scientific disciplines. Over a dozen students from diverse fields—including economics, business, and the sciences—learned how to structure documents with labelled equations, citations, tables, and section referencing.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_may_latex_workshop/

May: SNAP Coffee Catch-Up

Our casual SNAP Coffee meetups continue to be a success, with 20+ attendees at each event. This month's session saw a strong turnout from postgraduates, with conversations ranging from reflections on the recent LaTeX workshop to ideas for improving the next one. These gatherings provide an excellent opportunity to share experiences, network, and exchange tips in a relaxed and informal setting.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_may_snap_coffee/

17 July – SNAP Workshop: *Introduction to Shell*

Emily O'Riordan, a lecturer in the School of Engineering and Computer Science, and Richard Littauer, a postgraduate student in the same school, led a hands-on workshop introducing students to the basics of the Unix Shell and BASH. The session, supported by Angela Xue from the School of Chemical and Physical Sciences, guided participants through essential command-line skills such as navigating directories, managing files, and chaining commands with pipes.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_jul_shell_workshop/

July – SNAP Coffee Meet-Up at Milk & Honey

Our casual SNAP Coffee meetups continue to be a success, with 20+ attendees at each event. This month's session saw a strong turnout from postgraduates, with conversations ranging from reflections on the previous workshops to ideas for improving the next ones. These gatherings provide an excellent opportunity to share experiences, network, and exchange tips in a relaxed and informal setting.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_july_snap_coffee/

22 July – Workshop: Globus Endpoint Setup

Steven Jones from the Digital Solutions team at Victoria University of Wellington led a hands-on workshop introducing the Globus data transfer platform. Participants from a range of disciplines learned how to configure their computers as Globus endpoints and securely share data across systems. The session highlighted practical applications for research workflows, offering step-by-step guidance and space for questions in an interactive setting.

https://vuw-snap.github.io/SNAP-decisions/posts/2025_jul_globus_workshop/

Upcoming SNAP events: Come along and/or help contribute...

Dates for your diary, useful courses, seminars, and events—plus our own bespoke SNAP offerings!

SNAP Coffee Meet-Up, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 10:30 am at Milk & Honey

Join us for coffee and meet other researchers, students, and SNAP community members! Whether you're looking to connect, share ideas, or take a well-earned break, these relaxed meetups are a great place to start. Look for the table with our SNAP logo.

The dates for next two months are **20 August and 17 September**.

21 August – SNAP Workshop on Python – Part I

Want to get more confident with Python? SNAP student reps Richard and Angela are running a practical session on the basics of Python programming. This beginner-friendly workshop is perfect for anyone looking to develop coding skills and explore how Python can be used to automate tasks, analyse data, and enhance research workflows. They will cover some basic programming concepts as well as how to approach problems in a "Pythonic" way. By the end, you will know how to perform basic analyses and visualisation of data.

Register at: <https://vuw.libcal.com/event/5848106>

Thursday, 21 August 2-4 pm, ROOM MY403

02 and 09 September – SNAP Workshop: Learn AI

Dr. Emily O'Riordan will lead an interactive workshop introducing the fundamentals of Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), with a focus on real-world research applications. Designed for Staff, PostDocs, and PhD students, the session will help participants identify suitable ML models for their work and explore how AI can support data analysis, automation, and academic productivity. No prior experience is needed—just curiosity and a willingness to learn.

There will be two sessions for this workshop:

Session 01: *Tuesday, 02 September 1-4 pm, ROOM TTR106*

Session 02: *Tuesday, 09 September 1-4 pm, ROOM TTR106*

Register at: <https://vuw.libcal.com/event/5848009>

18 September – SNAP Workshop on Python – Part II

Want to get more confident with Python? SNAP student reps Richard and Angela are running a practical session on the intermediate level of Python programming. They will

delve into more niche and powerful Python functionalities. By the end, you will know how to construct a personal Python working environment.

Register at: <https://vuw.libcal.com/event/5848107>

Thursday, 18 September 2-4 pm, ROOM TTR205

An Update about REANNZ and NeSI Merger and Survey

The recent merger of REANNZ and NeSI marks a major step forward for New Zealand's research community. By integrating NeSI's advanced computing capabilities with REANNZ's high-performance networking infrastructure, the unified organisation aims to reduce fragmentation in eResearch services and provide more equitable access to digital research tools across the country. For university scientists, this means improved support for data-intensive research, faster and more reliable collaboration, and access to a broader range of expertise and resources—all critical for driving scientific innovation and impact in Aotearoa.

REANNZ is now looking to the broader eResearch sector to feed in information that will help in developing a strategy for the coming years. The following survey is seeking your input on the infrastructure and services REANNZ currently provides, and the services they could provide in future. Your feedback is important and will be used to support the development of our strategy.

The survey should only take 10 minutes to complete, depending on how much you have to share. It will remain open until 26 August 2025. Your insights and knowledge would be invaluable in this work. Please feel free to forward this survey to others in the sector who may want to contribute.

Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FD68N97>

Introducing SNAP Student Reps.

We're excited to introduce the current SNAP Student Representatives—postgraduate students from across the university who are helping grow and support our community. They contribute to organising events, fostering connections between departments, and creating a welcoming environment for students engaging with research software, modelling, and digital tools.

Richard Littauer

Richard Littauer is a PhD student in Computer Science. His primary focus is understanding ecology and bird populations using computational modeling. His research interests beyond that involve open science, open source, community science platforms, and taxonomy. More information on his projects can be found on his website at <https://burntfen.com>.

Angela Xue

Angela Xue is a PhD student at the School of Chemical and Physical Sciences. Her research involves studying the dynamics and analytics of astrophysical plasmas through fluid simulations.

SNAP Initiatives: activities that can help you (and us)

Overleaf!

Do you use Overleaf for your research? Do you think there is a need of an institutional license? Come and chat with us on a monthly coffee about it.

Coding Helpdesk

Are you an undergraduate or postgraduate student struggling with Python, MATLAB, Julia, R, Excel, or LaTeX for a science-related project? Tried everything but still stuck? The *SNAP Student Chapter* runs a Coding Helpdesk on their Discord server, where you can get support from fellow students and reps. Join the Discord Server here: <https://discord.gg/gf8UjRjC>

We are also hosting weekly office hours for anyone who wants to ask questions on tooling, best practices in coding, or other technical questions regarding their research **every Friday from 13:00–14:00 on the Discord Channel**—no appointments needed. Just drop by with your questions and we'll do our best to help!

Get involved

Do you want to be more involved in SNAP, contribute a workshop, volunteer to help out at a workshop, or help curate and build our website? We are looking for keen and enthusiastic volunteers. **Do you have an idea for a workshop or activity? Would you like to guest-edit a blog post? SNAP is keen to hear from Post-Docs and RAs as well as academics.** Do you know anyone who would like to be part of SNAP? Get them to e-mail us! You can make contact with a SNAP champion, or you can contact us at snap@vuw.ac.nz

SNAP in Images

We are keen to share images of our SNAP-based research on the website. **Do you have a colourful image that you would be happy to share** with the world and could enhance our website? Please send it to snap@vuw.ac.nz, include your name, an optional link to your webpage, and a caption. Best formats are *.png *.jpg and at least 8*8cm @ 300dpi.

Making contact with our SNAP champions

You would like to make contact with others in your area, contact one of our SNAP champions, they will be happy to help:

SNAP lead: Patricia Hunt, deputy: Brendan Harding

Champions:

School Chemical and Physical Sciences: Yvette Perrott

Antarctic Research Centre: Liz Keller

Ferrier Research Institute: Wanting Jiao

School of Mathematics and Statistics: Brendan Harding

School of Engineering and Computer Science: Emily O'Riordan

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies: Stephen Skalicky

School of Health: Anne Haase

Digital Solutions: David Alderman

Research Computing: Rohit Duggal

Post-Doc and Admin: Muhammad Hashmi

Student Reps: Richard Littauer and Angela Xue

all other areas: Patricia Hunt

If you don't want to be on our e-mail list, please e-mail us at snap@vuw.ac.nz

Best wishes,

From the SNAP Champions committee.