

Scarce Skills Development Fund Masters and Doctoral Scholarships Call for 2016

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) supports the training of postgraduate students through the Scarce Skills Development Fund (SSDF) scholarships. Funding for the SSDF scholarships is made available from the National Skills Fund residing within the DHET, and managed by the National Research Foundation (NRF). These scholarships advances the objectives of the National Development Plan to increase the number of academic staff members at South African universities with doctoral qualifications to 75% and, the number of PhD graduations to 6000 per annum by the year 2030. Furthermore, this funding instrument advances the joint deliverables of the Departments of Higher Education and Training and Science and Technology for high-end skills in South Africa. These high-end skills are critical for South Africa to establish a knowledge-based economy and for producing new knowledge for socio economic development. Under the SSDF, funding is made available for qualifying Honours', Masters and Doctoral students registered at public universities in South Africa. The Honours' bursaries are awarded to universities as a block grant for universities to nominate qualifying candidates to the NRF. Applications for free-standing SSDF Masters and Doctoral bursaries must be made by students on the NRF on-line application system.

The objectives of the SSDF are:

- To increase the number and quality of South African postgraduate students in specified scarce skills areas;
- To effect a transformation in the percentage representation of postgraduates from designated groups; and
- To support the development of postgraduate training to meet the specific needs of the country, in conjunction with the higher education sector and industry.

1. Scarce Skills Areas

The SSDF supports students who wish to pursue their postgraduate studies in the fields listed below *viz.*:

- **Management:**
Financial Management;
- **Financial sector:**
Accounting, Auditing, Statistics, Actuarial Science;

- **Biological sciences:**
Biotechnology;
- **Physical sciences:**
Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Geology, Computer Sciences, Information Systems, Chemistry;
- **Engineering:**
All fields of engineering; and
- **Sector specific:**
Agricultural Sciences, Transportation Studies, Tourism, Demography.

2. Value of the SSDF Masters and Doctoral Scholarships for 2016

Masters Scholarships	R80 000 per annum
Doctoral Scholarships	R110 000 per annum

In addition, Masters scholarship-holders may apply for a travel grant of up to R10 000 which can be used to attend local conferences, workshops, a visit to a laboratory or, any other activity that supports the scholarship-holder's current research progression. This is the maximum amount allowed during the tenure of the scholarship.

Doctoral scholarship-holders may apply for a travel grant of up to R15 000, for local travel, and up to R50 000, for international travel. These funds may be used to attend local conferences, workshops, visits to a laboratory or, any other activity that supports the scholarship-holder's current research progression. These are the maximum amounts allowed during the tenure of the scholarship.

Scholarship-holders who wish to access the travel grant must complete a travel grant application form provided by their university postgraduate office/research office for submission to, consideration and approval/disapproval by the NRF.

3. Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria listed below applies to applicants for Masters and Doctoral bursaries:

- Scholarships are open to **South African citizens and South African permanent residents only**;
- All applicants' for full-time Masters or Doctoral studies in South Africa must be registered or, intending to register at a South African public university;
- Applicants that already hold a degree at the level for which they are applying are not eligible.

4. Selection Criteria

The following will be considered in evaluating all applications in a competitive merit review process:

- The applicant's past, current and potential academic performance. This will be measured by the applicant's:
 - The potential of the applicant to undertake an independent research project;
 - Leadership roles;
 - Previous awards, prizes and honours; and
 - The potential research outputs and impact.
- The feasibility and merit of the applicant's research project proposal;
- Identification of a suitable supervisor and co-supervisor, where applicable;
- Support from the identified supervisor and referees.

5. Equity and redress

In line with the national imperative of equity and redress, the awarding of SSDF scholarships prioritises support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups *viz.* black, female and persons with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the NRF merit review and selection criteria are supported. This awarding of scholarships will give preference to candidates meeting the set gender and equity targets of 85% blacks, 55% women and 4% students with disabilities.

6. Conditions of award for the SSDF Masters and Doctoral scholarship

- Successful applicants who are offered the SSDF scholarship by the NRF are required to complete and sign the SSDF scholarship agreement that will be forwarded at the time of the award.
- A list of successful candidates will be published on the NRF website as soon as the internal NRF approval processes for the award are finalised.
- Masters' awards for all successful candidates will be administered as a block grant to university at which the student will be registered for his/her postgraduate degree.
- The scholarship-holder may undertake a maximum of 12 hours of teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstration duties per week on average during the year of study and may be remunerated for these duties, provided that they are reimbursed at a rate not exceeding the normal institution tariff for services rendered.

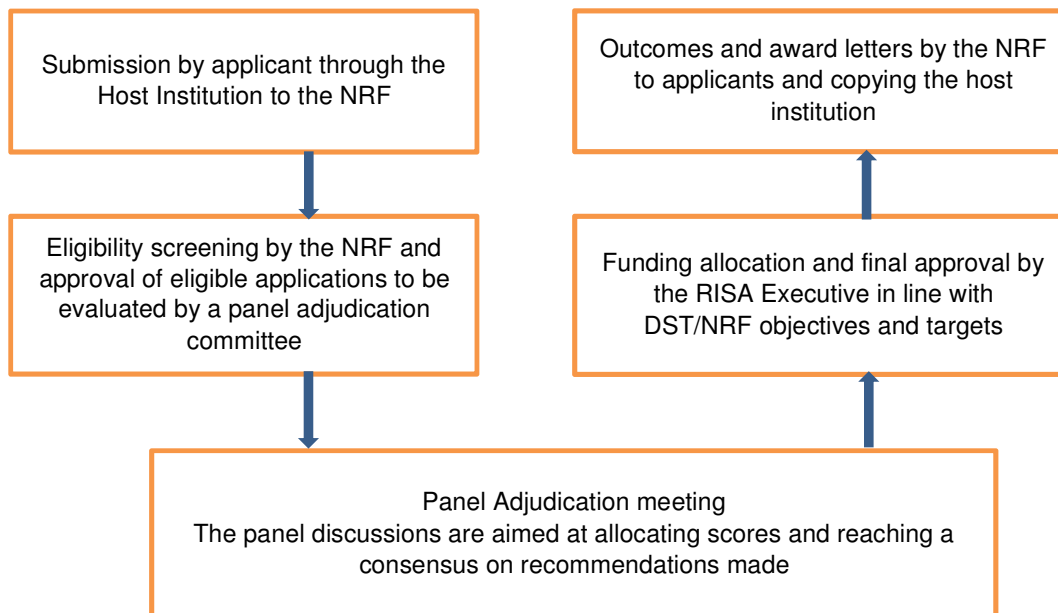
- Scholarship-holders may not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the award.
- All NRF scholarships awards shall be held as primary funding towards the research study.
- Scholarship-holders are allowed to hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to half the value of the NRF award. Alternatively, should the host university have an institutional capped value, the NRF award can be supplemented to the university capped value for the level of study.
- NRF scholarships may not be held simultaneously with a bursary / scholarship from any other government or NRF administered source.

7. How to submit an application for a SSDF Masters or Doctoral scholarship

Applicants can apply by following the steps below:

- Applications must be submitted through an online application process to the NRF.
- **Applicants must apply for the 2016 NRF Scarce Skills Development Fund Masters or Doctoral Scholarship by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>.**
- **Register / Login using your ID number and password.**
- Go to “My Applications” – “Create Application”.
- Select the call for which you are applying to viz. **NRF- Scarce Skills Development Fund Masters and Doctoral Scholarship Call for 2016.**
- Remember to complete all **compulsory** sections of the application as incomplete applications will not be considered for support by the NRF.
- Please attach the necessary documents in **one PDF file in the following order: ID document, proof of permanent residence (if applicable) and certified academic transcripts.** Should you not follow the guidelines for attaching the necessary documents your application will not be considered.
- Remember to **submit** your application on completion.
- Complete applications will be directed to the host university for verification before being forwarded to the NRF for further processing. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the university has approved the application and forwarded it to the NRF.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered (please refer to section 5 for details on eligibility for the NRF- Innovation Masters and Doctoral programme).
- Please contact the university postgraduate office or research office if you have any queries.
- The closing date for submitting applications is **7 August 2015.**
- **Please take note of your institutions internal closing dates as these will be set before the actual call closing date.**

NRF Review Processes



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