



Framework

NRF Honours' and final year B Tech Block Grant Bursaries for 2019

Directorate: **Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development (HICD)**

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1. Background and Rationale

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation of the Honours' and final year Bachelor of Technology (B Tech) block grant for (i) National Research Foundation (NRF) Freestanding Bursaries; (ii) Innovation Bursaries which includes the Department of Science and Technology (DST) priority research areas and NRF-Sasol bursaries; (iii) the Scarce Skills Bursaries supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) through the National Skills Fund (NSF); (iv) bursaries for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) undergraduate-funded students; and (v) bursaries for students with a disability. These funding instruments are funded by the NRF core grant allocation from National Treasury; the DST (DST/CON 0145/2017); and the DHET.

The NRF is mandated by an Act of Parliament, the National Research Foundation Act (Act No. 23 of 1998) to: *“Support and promote research through funding, human capacity development and the provision of the necessary research facilities, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge”*.

In support of this mandate, the NRF makes funds available to support Honours' and final year B Tech students for the 2019 academic year. These bursaries are released as block grants to South African public universities (Table 1). In addition, the block grant awards for qualifying students are made to universities depending on the availability of the budget as well as in line with the Ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DST-NRF Bursaries and Fellowships (Ministerial Guidelines on Bursaries and Fellowships, 2013).

Table 1: Bursaries for Honours' and final year B Tech studies funded by DHET and DST

| Bursaries | BSc Honours' and B Tech |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Scarce Skills Bursaries | Institutional nomination |
| NSFAS Postgraduate Pipeline | |
| Students living with a disability | |
| NRF Freestanding | |
| Innovation Bursary Scheme including: | |
| 1. DST Priority Research Areas | NRF nomination |
| 2. Current (2018) DST-NRF Interns | |
| 3. NRF - Sasol | |

In addition, the NRF provides support for students with disabilities at all levels of study. A **person with disabilities** is defined according to The Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities and the Employment Equity Act, (Act No 55 of 1998). The act states that: only people who satisfy all the criteria in the definition: (i) long-term or recurring; (ii) having a physical or mental impairment; (iii) which substantially limits, are considered as persons with disabilities.

According to the published *High Education Qualification Framework* as set out in the Schedule as policy in terms of the section 3 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), the Bachelor Honours' Degree (NQF Level 8) is a postgraduate specialisation qualification, characterised by the fact that it prepares students for research based postgraduate study. Additionally, programmes must include conducting and reporting research under supervision, worth at least 30 credits, in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study.

In contrast, a Postgraduate Diploma (NQF Level 8) is generally multi- or interdisciplinary in nature but may serve to strengthen and deepen the student's knowledge in a particular discipline or profession. The primary purpose of the qualification is to enable working professionals to undertake advanced reflection and development by means of a systematic survey of current thinking, practice and research methods in an area of specialisation. A sustained research project is not required but the qualification may include conducting and reporting research under supervision. It is against this backdrop that the NRF has taken a

strategic decision not to fund Postgraduate Diplomas because it does not meet the requirements for this programme.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Honours' and final year B Tech bursaries are to:

- Support the development of a critical mass of globally competitive human resources in prioritised knowledge areas;
- Promote the advancing of science, research and innovation;
- Contribute towards the increase in the number and quality of South African postgraduate students (Honours' and final year B Tech) in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering and (iii) Technology and in the (iv) Social Sciences and (v) Humanities;
- Build a pipeline of the next generation of skilled scientists and researchers in South Africa;
- Effect transformation in the proportional representation of postgraduate students from designated groups viz. black, female and persons with disabilities ; and
- Support the development of postgraduate training to meet the specific needs of the country in conjunction with the higher education sector and industry.

3. Areas of Support

3.1 NRF Freestanding

The bursary is intended to support full-time Honours' and final year B Tech candidates to pursue research studies in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering and (iii) Technology and in the (iv) Social Sciences and (v) Humanities, at public universities in South Africa. The percentage of supported students will be 80% from the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines and 20% from the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

3.2 Innovation (including DST Priority Research Areas)

The Innovation Bursary Scheme which also includes priority research areas* supports students who wish to pursue their Honours' and final year B Tech studies in the fields listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Innovation (including DST Priority Research Areas) supported for Honours' and final year B Tech Bursaries.

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Astronomy | Bioinformatics* | Biotechnology | Cellular and Molecular Biology |
| Chemistry | Climate Change* | Computer science | Drug Discovery and Development* |
| Earth Sciences | Earth Observation* | Ecology | Engineering |
| Functional Genomics* | Global Change, Society and Sustainability* | Indigenous Knowledge Systems* | Mathematical Sciences |
| Material Sciences | Marine Sciences* | Medicinal Plant * | Medical sciences |
| Nanotechnology* | Nuclear Science | Nuclear Technologies in Medicine and Biosciences* | Palaeosciences* |
| Physics | Renewable Energy* | Social Science and Humanities | Space Science* |

Priority Research Areas*

The percentage of supported students will be 80% from SET and 20% from the SSH disciplines.

3.3 Scarce Skills Bursaries and NSFAS Pipeline

The DHET managed National Skills Fund, supports full-time students that received NSFAS funding for their undergraduate studies and who wish to pursue their Honours' and final year B Tech studies in the fields listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Honours' and final year B Tech qualifications eligible for Scarce Skills Bursaries and NSFAS pipeline postgraduate funding.

| BSc Honours' | Scarce Skills Hons & B Tech | NSFAS Hons Pipeline | NSFAS B Tech Pipeline |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Accounting | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Actuarial Studies | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Agriculture | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Architecture | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Auditing | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Biotechnology | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Business Management | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Chemistry | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Computer Science | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Demography | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Economics | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Engineering | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Forestry | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Financial Management | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Geology | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Health Science | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Information Systems | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mathematical Sciences | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Physical Sciences | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Statistics | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Sport Science | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Transportation studies | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Tourism | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Note that the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting are not funded by the NRF.

3.4 Students with Disability

The bursary is intended to support Honours' and final year B Tech students with a physical or mental impairment, to pursue research degrees in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering and (iii) Technology and in the (iv) Social Sciences and (v) Humanities, at public universities in South Africa.

4. Eligible Applicants

The eligibility criteria listed below apply to all areas of support for Honours' and final year B Tech Bursaries:

- Bursaries are open to South African citizens and South African permanent residents who will register at a South African public university in 2019 on a **full-time basis**.

5. Students not eligible

- Foreign nationals;
- Students that already hold an Honours' or final year B Tech degree;
- Students pursuing an undergraduate degree irrespective of the degree that they are enrolled for;
- Students intending to pursue a Postgraduate diploma qualification, including Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting; and
- Students who will be employed (full/part time) in 2019 will not be considered.

6. Application Process

Students must first identify the university where they will be registered for the Honours' or final year B Tech degree before submitting an application to the NRF. Applications for funding in 2019 must be submitted to the university where they intend to register, through the NRF Online Submission System by accessing the link: <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/>. Applications may be submitted on the NRF Online Application System from **03 September to 14 December 2018**. **Universities must set their own internal closing dates for evaluation of applications.** It is the responsibility of the applicants' to ensure that the university has received and evaluated their application.

Further instructions on the application process will be made available on the NRF Honours' and final year B Tech Block Grant Application and Funding Guide for 2019.

7. Attachments

Applicants' must attach the following documents in the attachment section of the online application:

- i. Certified South African Identity Document. (Should be uploaded under Registration details)
- ii. Certified academic record or, in case of applicants with outstanding fees due to the university, attach an official letter that is stamped and signed, stating that the transcript is not issued due to outstanding fees owed to the university.
- iii. Proof of NSFAS or University Financial Aid funding for applicants that have indicated that they were previously funded by NSFAS or received University Financial Aid funding.
- iv. Applicants with disabilities must upload a medical certificate, in support of the disability.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Each university will evaluate applications submitted by the students intending to study at the respective institution using the scorecard provided by the NRF (Table 4)

Table 4: Criteria for the assessment of applications for NRF Honours' and final year B -Tech Bursaries

| Criteria | Description | Weight |
|------------------------|---|-------------|
| Academic Merit | Average percentage mark for two major subjects relevant to Honours degree applied for, in the final year of study, of the undergraduate degree. | 40% |
| Career path | Intention to continue with Master's degree. | 25% |
| Priority Research Area | Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas*. | 35% |
| Total | | 100% |

9. Selection and Awarding Criteria

In all Bursaries, **priority** will be given to financially needy yet academically capable applicants who were previously funded by the NSFAS and/or University Financial Aid. **This does not exclude applicants who were not previously funded by NSFAS and/or University Financial Aid from receiving postgraduate funding from the NRF.**

Each student nominated by the university must be selected and awarded based on the following selection criteria:

1. Availability of budget (NRF allocation);
2. Ministerial guidelines on demographic targets for equity and redress
 - a. 80% Black Students (African, Indian, Coloured);
 - b. 55% Women Students (African, Indian, Coloured, White);
 - c. 4% students with a disability.
3. NSFAS Pipeline Demographics targets.
 - a. 85% Black Students (African, Indian, Coloured);
 - b. 55% Women Students (African, Indian, Coloured, White);
 - c. 4% Students with disability.

Awarding Criteria

Awards must be made in the following order of priority:

1. Financially needy students (NSFAS or University Financial Aid).
2. Highest score as per the scorecard.

10. Student Nominations and NRF Approval

The NRF will allocate a block grant for a set number of bursaries to each university based on historical uptake, expressed need and the available budget. Universities will use a standard score card provided by the NRF to evaluate each application, before selecting and nominating students to take up the allocated bursaries. **The NRF will not approve nominations of students that did not submit an online application.**

11. Value of Support

Bursary values for full-time Honours' and final year B Tech students are indicated in Table 5. The bursary support is for one (1) year only and is not renewable.

Table 5: Bursary values for full-time Honours' and final year B Tech students for 2019 academic year

| Type of Bursary | Bursary value (per annum) | Maximum Funding period |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| NRF Freestanding | R30 000 | 1 year |
| DST Priority Research Areas | R60 000 | |
| Current DST-NRF Interns | | |
| Innovation Bursary Scheme | | |
| Students with disability | | |
| NRF-Sasol | | |
| Scarce Skills | | |
| NSFAS Postgraduate Pipeline | R76 000 | |

Assistive devices for students with disabilities

Bursary-holders with a disability may apply for additional funding for an assistive technology device of up to **R20 000**. This is the maximum amount allowed during the tenure of the bursary. As defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA), an assistive technology device is *"any piece of equipment, or product system, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities"*.

12. Conditions of Award

- Successful applicants' who are offered the bursaries by the NRF are required to complete and sign the student agreement that will be forwarded at the time of the award.
- The bursary-holder may not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the bursary, but he/she will be allowed to undertake teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstration duties during the year of study, and he/she may be remunerated for his/her services rendered at the normal university tariff for services.
- All NRF bursary awards shall be held as primary funding towards the research study.
- Bursary-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 bursaries may not be held simultaneously with a bursary / bursary from any other government or NRF administered source.
- The bursary-holder must obtain the degree for which the bursary was awarded by the contractual date which is within one (1) year after NRF funding has ceased and notify the NRF *via* the university authority. Should the bursary-holder not complete the degree for which the bursary was awarded, the funds will have to be returned to the NRF plus interest at the prevailing prime rate charged by the NRF bankers.

13. Financial Control

These awards will be managed in terms of standard NRF financial policies and procedures. The payment of the grant by the NRF to successful applicants will be administered by the Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate to the relevant institutions. The institution will in turn administer the funds on behalf of the successful applicant to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF. Bursaries not taken up by June of the year of award will be cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.

14. NRF Contact Persons

For programme related enquiries, please contact:

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15. Relevant Strategies on National Priority Research Areas

1. <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/143-the-ten-year-plan-for-science-and-technology>
2. <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/174-national-research-a-development-strategy-2002>
3. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Science_Technology_White_Paper.pdf
4. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Bioeconomy%20Strategy_a.pdf
5. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/PALEO_STRATEGY_DST_Final_.pdf
6. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/DST_Nanotech_18012006_0.pdf
7. http://www.gov.za/document?search_query=strategy&field_gcisdoc_doctype=All&field_gcisdoc_subjects=518&start_date=&end_date=&=Search
8. <http://www.gov.za/about-sa/science-technology>