



**Application and Funding Framework for  
NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for the 2021 Academic  
Year**

**The Designated Authority (DA) INTERNAL CLOSING DATES are  
as follows:**

**Honours Applications: 18 NOVEMBER 2020**

**Masters Applications: 14 JULY 2020**

**Doctoral Applications: 14 JULY 2020**

**Masters and Doctoral Extension Support Applications: 14 JULY 2020**

**Doctoral Abroad (Nuffic) Applications Split - Site: 14 JULY 2020**

**Doctoral Abroad (Nuffic) Applications Single - Site: 01 June 2020**

## NRF Partners for Postgraduate Student Funding



**science & innovation**

Department:  
Science and Innovation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**higher education  
& training**

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**DAAD**

Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

**sasol**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**twas**

**THE WORLD ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**  
for the advancement of science in developing countries



International Institute for  
Applied Systems Analysis

IIASA [www.iiasa.ac.at](http://www.iiasa.ac.at)

**BRITISH  
COUNCIL**

## Table of contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Global Knowledge Partnership</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Areas of Support</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Students not eligible for NRF support</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Financial Means Test</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Applicable Allowances</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Application Process</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Attachments</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Review of applications</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Equity and Redress</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Progress Report</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>13.</b>	<b>Financial Control</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>14.</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation by the NRF</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>15.</b>	<b>Conditions of Award (Selected)</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>16.</b>	<b>NRF Contact Persons</b>	<b>21</b>

## 1. Introduction

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is mandated by an Act of Parliament, the NRF Act (Act No. 23 of 1998, amended) to: *“contribute to national development by promoting and supporting research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of research, including indigenous knowledge and thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic.”* In giving effect to its mandate, the NRF is guided by a Transformation Framework that identifies the specific need to focus on transformation of the equity profiles of the South African research workforce; of the knowledge enterprise; of the relationship between science and society; and the building of a diverse and fully inclusive learning organisation.

Transformation of the equity profiles of the South African research workforce is reliant on the ability to attract, nurture and retain high academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level. The NRF is prioritising postgraduate students with research inclination as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of researchers and scholars to sustain South Africa’s knowledge enterprise. Another objective is to fast-track the development of postgraduate students in high-impact, priority and vulnerable disciplines critical for national socio-economic development.

The NRF is therefore implementing a new Postgraduate Funding Policy wherein postgraduate funding allocations will be underpinned by the principles of equity of opportunity; representivity; prioritisation; and enhanced access, success and throughput. This Postgraduate Funding Policy gives effect to the Ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DSI/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships (2013). Citizenship, age, gender and disability will be considered in the allocation of funding, with transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Financial need, is for the first time, included as a criterion for determining the level of funding. To attract and retain a diverse range of students, funding levels will be increased to cover the full cost of study for students who meet required criteria. In order to develop a future cohort of researchers, it is vital that postgraduate students complete their studies without delay and that they continue through to completion of their doctoral studies. To advance these priorities, the NRF will offer guaranteed funding for full-time studies from honours through to the doctoral degree level, subject to satisfactory performance at each consecutive postgraduate level. A separate Graduate Internship Programme, funded by the NRF, is available for bachelors’ graduates who intend to pursue honours studies simultaneously with work experience.

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation guidelines. This framework document must be read together with the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) System (2018).

It is acknowledged that meaningful and fundamental transformation must include and extend beyond demographics of the knowledge workforce and take account of other aspects of the knowledge enterprise. Additionally, it is critical that disability is appropriately addressed along with other areas of transformation. The Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the PSET (2018), defines Disability as *“the loss or elimination of opportunities to take part in the life of the community, equitably with others, encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological or other impairments, which may be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, thereby causing activity limitations and participation restriction within mainstream society. These barriers may be due to economic, physical/structural, social, attitudinal and/or cultural factors.”*

## **2. Global Knowledge Partnerships (GKP)**

International exposure for postgraduate students is an integral component of the NRF strategic goal to create an internationally competitive, transformed and representative South African research system. The NRF intends to source new, and realign existing support programmes to offer opportunities for outstanding doctoral students in South Africa to spend from three (3) to twelve (12) months abroad. The international training opportunity will enable outstanding doctoral students to enhance their theoretical and practical knowledge; to form international networks; and to access mentorship and global research funds and infrastructures.

All South African students receiving NRF funding for doctoral studies in South Africa are encouraged to incorporate a period of international training that forms an integral part of their doctoral training programme. International training opportunities must be identified and financed in consultation with the support of the doctoral supervisor(s) and the university. The NRF will facilitate international training opportunities but will not fund these placements. The existing international training opportunities for NRF funded doctoral students are outlined below.

Students receiving **NRF-DAAD in-country doctoral funding** may apply for a short-term research fellowship for research training spanning two to six months in Germany. Application forms for these short-term research fellowships and further information can be obtained from: [daad@wits.ac.za](mailto:daad@wits.ac.za).

The **Fulbright Foreign Student Program** in partnership with the NRF supports **Visiting Student Researchers** to undertake non-degree doctoral research training at a university in the United States of America. South African citizens and permanent residents with a minimum of five (5) years of permanent residency status in South Africa may apply annually for support under the Fulbright Visiting Student Researcher programme (<https://apply.iie.org/ffsp2021>). Applications are open for the 2021-2022 academic year and will **close on 20 April 2020**.

The South African Systems Analysis Centre (SASAC) initiative provides an opportunity for NRF funded in-country doctoral students who are registered at South African public universities to advance their research under the supervision of senior researchers from the **International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)**, the United Kingdom (UK) and South Africa. South African students are eligible to apply to IIASA for an international placement at IIASA in Austria or to the **UK Newton Fund** for an international placement in the UK.

The South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) scholarship programme provides an opportunity for the SARAO funded masters and doctoral students who are registered at South African public universities to advance their research by supporting international travel. Students that are eligible to must apply to SARAO directly.

### **3. Areas of Support**

Postgraduate funding is intended to support honours, masters and doctoral candidates to pursue full-time studies at South African public universities, in all areas of Science, Engineering, Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities including Indigenous Knowledge Systems, focusing on research aligned with one of the National Priority Research Areas.

The **broad disciplines supported by the NRF for Postgraduate studies are:** Accounting, Actuarial Science, Agricultural Sciences, Astronomy, Auditing, Bioinformatics, Biotechnology, Cellular and Molecular Biology, Chemistry, Climate Change, Computer science, Demography, Drug Discovery and Development, Earth Sciences, Earth Observation, Ecology, Economic Sciences, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Financial Management, Functional Genomics, Geology, Global Change, Society and Sustainability, Health Sciences, Information Science, Information Systems, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Law, Mathematical Sciences, Marine Sciences, Medicinal Plant, Medical sciences, Nanotechnology, Nuclear Technologies in Medicine and Biosciences, Palaeosciences, Polar Science, Physics, Renewable Energy, Social Science and Humanities, Space Science, Statistics, Transportation Studies and Tourism.

The overall percentage of supported students by the NRF will be 80% from the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines and 20% from the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

## **4. Eligibility Criteria**

### **4.1 Eligibility for first time applicants for honours, masters and doctoral funding**

The NRF minimum academic requirements for postgraduate funding are as follows:

- A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study for honours funding;
- A minimum average of 65% of all subjects at the honours level OR a minimum average of 65% of all subjects at the Postgraduate diploma OR a minimum average of 65% of the final year subjects of a four-year degree for masters funding;
- A minimum of 65% at the masters' level for doctoral funding.

Where universities classify masters' students' results in the categories of "Pass" or "Pass with distinction", the university must disclose to the NRF the numerical mark for making such classification. A student with a classification of "Pass" or "Pass with distinction" will be allowed to apply for the current call, however this student will be allocated a default score of 1. For the call that will be open in April 2021, student without a numerical pass mark will not be eligible for NRF funding.

The eligibility criteria for funding at Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS) listed in Table 1 below apply to all first-time applicants for honours, masters and doctoral funding. The FCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens and permanent residents only, who are either financially needy, living with a disability or exceptional academic achievers. However, the PCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens, permanent residents and 5% of international students.

**Table 1. Eligibility criteria for NRF postgraduate funding for Full Cost of Study and Partial Cost of Study for the 2021 academic year.**

Study Level	Full Cost of Study		Partial Cost of Study
	Exceptional Achievers	Financially Needy and Students with Disability	Other
Honours	Average of $\geq 75\%$ Mark in Final Year of study	Average $\geq 65\%$ Mark in Final Year of study	Average $\geq 65\%$ Mark in Final Year of study
	<b>Applicants for honours funding</b> must be <b>28</b> years of age or younger in the year of application. Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible for honours bursaries.		
Masters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum average of 75% of all subjects at the honours level; OR</li> <li>• Minimum average of 75% of all subjects at the Postgraduate diploma; OR</li> <li>• Minimum average of 75% of the final year subjects of a four-year degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum average of 65% of all subjects at the honours level; OR</li> <li>• Minimum average of 65% of all subjects at the Postgraduate diploma; OR</li> <li>• Minimum average of 65% of the final year subjects of a four-year degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum average of 65% of all subjects at the honours level; OR</li> <li>• Minimum average of 65% of all subjects at the Postgraduate diploma; OR</li> <li>• Minimum average of 65% of the final year subjects of a four-year degree</li> </ul>
	<b>Applicants for masters funding</b> must be <b>30</b> years of age or younger in the year of application.		
Doctoral	Minimum Average of 75% for Masters	Minimum average of 65% for Masters	Minimum average of 65% for Masters
	<b>Applicants for doctoral funding</b> must be <b>32</b> years of age or younger in the year of application.		

#### 4.2 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-SARAO applicants

The NRF-SARAO, a national facility of the NRF, manages and coordinates all radio astronomy initiatives in South Africa, including the MeerKAT and KAT-7 telescopes in the Karoo, the Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory (HartRAO) in Gauteng, and the African Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Programme in the eight SKA partner countries in Africa. The NRF-SARAO also manages South Africa's engagements with the International SKA Organisation.

Students who wish to pursue postgraduate-level research relevant to the scientific and technical goals of the SKA and MeerKAT radio telescopes, are eligible to apply for the NRF-SARAO scholarships. Only applicants who are South African citizens or permanent residents or citizens



of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia are eligible for NRF-SARAO postgraduate scholarships.

#### **4.3 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-TWAS doctoral applicants**

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1 applicants' for the NRF-TWAS doctoral funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Applicants must register at a South African public university in 2021, on a **full-time basis** and may be based at any South African public research institution including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Science Councils and National Research Facilities. Details of NRF Recognised HEIs and other Public Research Institutions are available [here](#).
- The NRF-TWAS doctoral funding is open **only to citizens and permanent residents from developing countries on the African continent and elsewhere**. Please refer to the list of [eligible developing countries](#) and the list of [66 priority countries](#) for TWAS funding.
- Applicants must not be living, studying or working in South Africa in 2020.
- Applicants who were previously employed or studying towards a degree, or undertaking research in South Africa, and have returned to their country of origin, but have been in their country of origin for less than two (2) years, are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants must be thirty-two **(32) years of age or younger on 31 December** of the year of application for the doctoral scholarship.
- Visa and immigration laws of the applicant's home country and South Africa must be met by the applicant. The applicant must arrange his/her own Visa and/or study permit under the programme for study in South Africa. **Neither NRF nor TWAS will be responsible for assisting with visa requirements.**
- **However, the NRF will cover cheapest return economy flight and the visa and/or study permit costs for NRF-TWAS doctoral applicants.**
- Upon completion of their studies, all successful applicants' must return to their country of origin. **Students who fail to return to their home country will be liable to pay back the amount to the NRF equal to the number of years of study support they have received.**
- Only applicants who wish to pursue research under Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines will be supported under the NRF-TWAS Doctoral funding.

#### **4.4 Eligibility for Extension Support applicants for full-time masters and doctoral studies**

The eligibility criteria for applicants for Extension Support for full-time masters and doctoral studies in 2021 are as follows:

- Applicants must be NRF scholarship-holders in 2020. Extensions will only be granted under exceptional circumstances and will be for either six (6) or twelve (12) months as the NRF expects all postgraduate students to complete their qualifications within the NRF funding period.
- Applicants applying for extension support at the master's level must have registered for their master's degree in 2019 or July 2018.
- Applicants applying for extension support at the doctoral level must have registered for their doctoral degree in 2018 or July 2017.
- Only students pursuing full-time masters or doctoral studies in South Africa are eligible to apply.
- Applicants for extension support will be eligible for postgraduate funding at the same value as their 2020 funding.

#### **5. Students not eligible for NRF postgraduate funding**

The following categories of individuals are not eligible to apply for NRF postgraduate funding.

- Students who hold NRF funding (freestanding or grantholder-linked) for first-year masters studies in 2020, or first- or second-year doctoral studies in 2020, are not eligible to apply for funding as new students. These continuing students must submit a Progress Report (PR) on the NRF Online Submission System by 15 February 2021 to receive funding for the 2021 academic year, as per the Conditions of Grant and NRF approved funding level.
- Students who registered for their masters' studies before July 2019.
- Students who registered for their doctoral studies before July 2018.
- Individuals that already hold a degree for the same level at which they intend studying, are not eligible to apply, e.g. individuals that hold a masters qualification may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding for masters studies.
- **Students who will be in their pre-proposal year in 2021 should not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding for the pre-proposal year. The pre-proposal year should also not be counted as the first year of registration.**

- Students who intend to register for, or who are studying for a 100% masters by coursework, professional masters or professional doctoral degree, may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding.
- Individuals who will be in a salaried (contractual or permanent) employment that exceeds 12 hours of work per week, while pursuing honours, masters or doctoral studies may not hold NRF Postgraduate Funding for full-time studies.
- Individuals that are on sabbatical leave from their current employment may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding.

## 6. Financial Means Test

The **Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)** currently defines **financially needy students** as individuals who come from households with a **combined net family income of no more than R350 000** (three hundred and fifty thousand rand) per annum.

Applicants will be subjected to a financial means test to determine their financial need. Applicants for NRF postgraduate funding who were previously supported by National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) will not be subjected to a financial means test, however, they **must attach proof** in the form of an official university stamped financial statement or signed agreement with NSFAS or ISFAP.

The NRF acknowledges that there are financially needy students that may not have undergone a financial means test prior to applying to the NRF for postgraduate funding, and therefore, a financial means tests for those applicants' will be facilitated in partnership with ISFAP. Applicants that need to undertake a financial means test must provide the following:

- a. Completed NRF-ISFAP consent form certified by a commissioner of oath; and
- b. Consent to the NRF-ISFAP, and/or such other person or entity that the NRF-ISFAP may designate, the absolute right and permission to conduct creditworthy checks, affordability assessments and to verify his/her combined household income in order to ascertain whether they qualify for NRF-ISFAP funding.

The above checks and assessments by NRF-ISFAP will be conducted strictly in accordance and/or in compliance with the provisions of the National Credit Act No 34 of 2005.

Applicants who were previously funded by Funza Lushaka, Department of Military Veterans, or Department of Social Development (DSD) bursaries for their undergraduate studies must undergo a financial means test upon application for NRF postgraduate funding. Typically, students funded by Funza Lushaka, Department of Military Veterans or DSD are nominated by the funder and financial need is not a criterion in the award of the undergraduate bursaries (although the bursaries are administered *via* NSFAS), hence they will be subjected to a financial means test at the postgraduate level.

## 7. Applicable Allowances

Successful applicants will be funded either at FCS or PCS. The **FCS** will cover **tuition, accommodation, living allowance, meal allowance** and a once-off allowance for study resource material such as an electronic device (Table 2). The **PCS** will cover **tuition and accommodation** costs only (Table 2).

**Table 2: Annual NRF allowances applicable for FCS and PCS for honours, masters and doctoral studies.**

Category	Funding per level of Postgraduate Study <sup>1</sup>					
	Honours		Masters		Doctoral	
	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS
Personal care/Living allowance (Rand)	12 000 pa	n/a	30 000 pa	n/a	48 000 pa	n/a
Meal/Food allowances (Rand)	27 000 pa	n/a	27 000 pa	n/a	27 000pa	n/a
Maximum Accommodation allowance (Rand) <sup>2</sup>	50 000	50 000	60 000	60 000	60 000	60 000
Maximum Tuition Fees (Rand) <sup>3</sup>	50 000	50 000	40 000	40 000	30 000	30 000
Electronic study Device allowance (Rand) <sup>4</sup>	10 000	n/a	10 000	n/a	10 000	n/a
<b>Total (Rand)</b>	<b>149 000 pa</b>	<b>100 000 pa</b>	<b>167 000 pa</b>	<b>100 000 pa</b>	<b>175 000 pa</b>	<b>90 000 pa</b>
Maximum Assistive technology device (Rand)	20 000	n/a	20 000	n/a	20 000	n/a

<sup>1</sup> The allowances per category will be reviewed on an annual basis for adjustment where applicable.

<sup>2</sup> Accommodation fee will be capped and paid as per invoice. Limited to maximum cost of the equivalent university owned on-campus accommodation at a particular institution. Students accommodated in private accredited accommodation must also provide proof of lease agreement.

<sup>3</sup> Tuition fee will be capped and paid as per invoice. Tuition fee is the agreed institutional fee for the actual programme of study. Registration fee to be included in the tuition fee. Qualifying NRF funded students are not required to pay registration fee upfront.

<sup>4</sup> The electronic study device allowance will be provided as a once-off for the duration of the postgraduate studies.

Students 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 scholarship. **An assistive device** is defined as any device, product, equipment or tool that is designed or adapted to enable persons with disabilities to participate in activities, tasks or actions including: (i) **mobility aids** such as wheelchairs, prostheses and crutches as well as service animals (ii) **communication aids** such as hearing aids, Frequency Modulation (FM) systems; (iii) **sensory aids** such as white canes; noise reducing headphones and coloured lenses (iv) **technology aids** such as computers for alternate and augmentative communication, screen readers, magnifiers, texts in audio format (Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the PSET, 2018).

The NRF postgraduate funding is aimed at supporting students intending to register at a South African public university for fulltime honours, masters or doctoral studies. Extension support for masters and doctoral students will be approved only under exceptional circumstances. The maximum period of support for each postgraduate level of study is indicated in **Table 3** below:

**Table 3: Maximum period of NRF funding for each postgraduate level of study.**

Level of study	Maximum period of support
Honours	One (1) year
Master's	Two (2) years
Doctoral	Three (3) years
Master's upgrade to doctoral	Four (4) years
Extension Support for masters and doctoral	Six (6) or twelve (12) months

The period of support is calculated from the first year of registration for the study or research regardless of NRF funding and excludes the pre-proposal year.

## **8. Application Process**

Students must first identify the university where they will be registered for their postgraduate degree before submitting an application to the NRF. Applications for funding in 2021 must be submitted to the university where students intend to register, through the NRF Online

Submission System by accessing the link: <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/>. **Universities will set their own internal cut-off dates for applications and applicants must abide by those dates.** Further instructions on the application process will be made available in the NRF Application and Funding Guide for 2021.

Postgraduate students who have been recruited by an NRF funded supervisor [e.g. SARChI, CoEs, Thuthuka, Global Knowledge Research Programmes such as Earth Systems Science Research Programme (ESSRP); Global Change Social Sciences Research Programme (GCSSRP); Risk and Vulnerability Science Centres (RVSCs); African Earth Observation Network (AEON); Foundational Biodiversity Information Programme (FBIP) and South African Earth Observation Network (SAEON)] to be part of a research project should provide the NRF six-digit grant UID (unique identification number) or provide the NRF application reference number if the research project application has been submitted to the NRF for review. Additionally, postgraduate students who have not been recruited by an NRF funded supervisor will not need to provide a UID or application reference number on the online application template.

**All continuing students who are eligible for a second or third year of funding must submit a Progress Report and not a new application. Refer to section 12.**

## **9. Documents to be attached to applications**

Applicants must refer to the NRF Postgraduate student Application and Funding Guide for required attachments.

## **10. Review of applications**

### **10.1 Review of applications by university review committees**

Honours, masters and doctoral funding applications will be reviewed at the institution at which the student intends studying for the postgraduate degree. Reviews will be undertaken using standardised scorecards provided by the NRF as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Only applications that are recommended for NRF funding based on the merit review, may be submitted to the NRF by the university Designated Authority (DA). Review scores and recommendations must be uploaded onto the NRF Online Submission System by the university DA when approving an application on the system.

The university DA must submit a report on the review process and comments from the reviewers signed by either the Deans of Faculties or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research.

## **10.2 Review of applications for strategic initiatives**

Applications that fall under specific strategic initiatives may be reviewed by separate review panels. The strategic initiatives include amongst others the NRF-SARAO postgraduate funding, the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence (CoEs), the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI), and the NRF-DAAD in-country funding. Reviews will be undertaken using standardised scorecards provided by the NRF as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. Only applications that are recommended for NRF funding based on the merit review, may be submitted to the NRF by the DA. Review scores and recommendations will be uploaded onto the NRF Online Submission System by the DA when approving an application on the system.

The DA must submit a report on the review process and comments from the reviewers signed by either the respective Director, Deans of Faculties or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research.

## **10.3 Transparency and accountability**

To be compliant with the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act 3 of 2000) and in order to respond to appeals from students, the reports on the review process undertaken must include proof of the following:

- The names of committee or panel members of subject experts that participated in the review of applications for NRF postgraduate funding;
- Minutes of the review meeting and sign-off by the Chairperson of the review committee; and
- Recommendations made by the panel on whether applications are recommended or not recommended for funding, with clearly stated reasons.

Appeals that relate to the review of applications by the institutions must be responded to by the respective institutional DA.

## **10.4 Standardised review scorecards for reviewing applications**

Four standardised scorecards as shown in **Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7** must be used to review applications for honours, masters, doctoral and extension support funding respectively.

**Table 4. Review Scorecard for New Applications for Honours Level Funding.**

<b>Review Criteria and Weighting</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Academic merit (40%)</b>	Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final-year undergraduate courses.
<b>2. Completion time for undergraduate degree (40%)</b>	Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree.
<b>3. Priority Research Area (20%)</b>	Research aligned with one of the NRF listed research priority areas.

**Table 5. Review Scorecard for New Applications for Masters Level Funding**

<b>Review Criteria and Weighting</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Academic merit (35%)</b>	<p>Average percentage mark for the honours degree if completed;</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final-year undergraduate courses for students currently registered for a honours degree;</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Average percentage mark for major subjects in the third-year undergraduate courses for students in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.</p>
<b>2. Completion time for previous degree (15%)</b>	<p>Time taken to complete the honours degree if completed;</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree if the honours degree is in progress;</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Time taken to complete third-year undergraduate courses for students in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.</p>
<b>3. Priority Research Area (20%)</b>	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.
<b>4. Project Outline (30%)</b>	Provide an overview of your research concept and your proposed aim.



**Table 6. Review Scorecard for New Applications for Doctoral Level Funding**

<b>Review Criteria and Weighting</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Academic merit (30%)</b>	Percentage mark for the master's degree if completed; <b>or</b> If the master's degree is in progress, average percentage mark for the honours degree; <b>or</b> Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
<b>2. Completion time for previous degree (15%)</b>	Time taken for completion of the master's degree if completed; <b>or</b> If the master's degree is in progress, time taken to complete the honours degree or four-year undergraduate degree.
<b>3. Track record or Research Outputs (15%)</b>	Evidence of research outputs in accredited peer-reviewed publications and, presentations at conferences/symposiums.
<b>4. Priority Research Area (10%)</b>	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.
<b>5. Originality of the Doctoral study (20%)</b>	Problem statement, Identified knowledge gaps relating to the problem statement, Aim and Objectives of the study.
<b>6. Potential Impact of the research (10%)</b>	Potential to contribute to national research strategies and the strategic goals of the knowledge economy.

**Table 7. Review Scorecard for Masters and Doctoral Level Extension Support**

<b>Review Criteria and Weighting</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Progress to date (25%)</b>	Report on research work completed in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree.
<b>2. Reasons why the study could not be completed in the NRF maximum funding period (25%)</b>	Explanation of why the study could not be completed within the NRF funding period.
<b>3. Work plan to complete the degree within the indicated timeframes (50%)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work plan for six (6) or twelve (12) months, indicating activities for completion of masters or doctoral degree, indicating the start and completion date of each activity;</li> <li>2. Proposed date for submission of the dissertation for examination;</li> <li>3. Timelines for corrections to dissertation from reviewers;</li> <li>4. Details of manuscripts to be drafted and submission timelines; and</li> <li>5. Proposed graduation date.</li> </ol>

## **11. Equity and Redress**

The NRF applies measures for enhancing equity, fairness, and justice in accordance with the South African Constitution. The NRF adheres to the Immigration Act of 2002 which states that the holder of a permanent resident permit *"has all the rights, privileges, duties and obligations of a citizen, save for those rights, privileges, duties and obligations which a law or the Constitution explicitly ascribes to citizenship"*. Additionally, the NRF adheres and supports the SADC protocol on education and training requiring member states to reserve at least 5% of admissions for students from South African Development Community (SADC) nations other than their own, treating these as home students for purposes of tuition and accommodation.

In line with the national imperative of enhancing equity of postgraduate student access, success and throughput using funding, all postgraduate funding must prioritise support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups viz. black, female and persons with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the merit review and selection criteria are supported. Additionally, the NRF will prioritise applicants' who are financially needy, yet academically capable and previously funded by the NSFAS, NRF and/or ISFAP.

All NRF postgraduate funding will be allocated as follows:

- **95%** to South African citizens and permanent residents;
- **5%** to students from the SADC countries and the rest of the world; and
- **55%** to women.

The **South African Citizens and permanent residents' targets** are further disaggregated in terms of **race and disability** as follows:

- **90%** Black (African, Coloured, and Indian);
- **10%** White; and
- **1%** Students living with a disability.

## **12. Progress Reporting**

All students currently funded in 2020 (refer to section 12.2) and new students to be funded in 2021 (refer to section 12.1) must submit Progress Reports endorsed by the Supervisor to ensure continuation of funding. All **continuing students** that are eligible for a continuation scholarship for the next year of study must **submit a Progress Report (PR)** and not a new application. Final year students must submit final year reports.

### **12.1 Bi-annual progress reports for honours, masters and doctoral students commencing with NRF FCS or PCS postgraduate funding in 2021**

All students receiving NRF postgraduate funding at either FCS or PCS will be required to submit Bi-annual Progress Reports on the NRF Online Submission System on the dates indicated in the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG).

The progress reports will open throughout the year for honours, masters and doctoral students. However, the students will be expected to submit the reports to the NRF as follows:

- a. The honours students will be expected to submit the first report by end July 2021 and final report by mid- February 2022.
- b. Masters and doctoral students must submit the first report by end July 2021 and second report by mid-February 2022.
- c. The honours, masters and doctoral students, by end of their funding period, they must have submitted 2, 4 and 6 reports respectively.

## **12.2 Progress Reports for masters and doctoral students funded in 2020 academic year**

The following continuing students that received NRF funding in 2020 must submit a Progress Report based on their signed COG on the NRF Online submission system by mid-February 2021 in order to receive continuation funding in 2021. These continuing students, as indicated below, are expected to submit the progress reports once a year.

- a. Masters students that are eligible for a second year of support for masters studies in 2021;
- b. Doctoral students that are eligible for a second or third year of support for doctoral studies in 2021;
- c. Doctoral students that have upgraded from a masters to a doctoral degree and who are eligible for a third or fourth year of funding for doctoral studies in 2021

## **13. Financial Control**

The NRF Postgraduate Funding 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 NRF Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate to the relevant institutions. The institutions will in turn administer the funds on behalf of the successful applicant to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF.

## **14. Monitoring and Evaluation by the NRF**

The NRF will continuously monitor and review the progress of the students at an individual and institutional level. On an ongoing basis, the NRF will undertake institutional visits and focus group discussions which will be conducted at the host universities.

### **14.1 NRF-DAAD Funded students**

The DAAD and NRF would like to strengthen and maintain contacts with former in-country scholarship-holders, therefore the NRF-DAAD funded final year students will receive a questionnaire that they must complete truthfully and forward to the NRF. The scholarship holder gives consent for the questionnaire to be forwarded to the DAAD for their records. The universities should ensure that this information is transmitted to the NRF as soon as the scholarship ends. The scholarship holder is expected to uphold contact with the DAAD and join

its extensive Alumni family. Please contact the DAAD Information Centre, Johannesburg for further information ([daad@wits.ac.za](mailto:daad@wits.ac.za)).

## **15. Conditions of Grant Award**

Successful applicants' that receive a provisional award for postgraduate funding from the NRF are required to complete and sign the NRF CoG, which will be forwarded at the time of the award. The signed CoG must be submitted together with the signed Student-Supervisor Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and other required attachments. The CoG includes amongst others the following conditions for the grant award:

- a. Postgraduate funding awarded for the 2021 academic year, that is not taken up by 30 April 2021 will be automatically cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.
- b. All NRF postgraduate funding shall be held as the primary funding towards the research study.
- c. Students on FCS may not receive another FCS scholarship from any other government or private sector funder.
- d. If a student receives financial support from another source, NRF postgraduate funding may be awarded, however, the allocations must be reduced accordingly. The NRF may not pay for any amounts already covered by another funder. Universities and students must report this information to the NRF in writing, so that funding adjustments may be made.
- e. Students receiving PCS funding from the NRF may receive top-up funding from another source provided that the total funding received by a student from the NRF and the other source (s) source does not exceed that of the FCS funding.
- f. If a student receives a merit award from their institution, the NRF funding will also be reduced accordingly, so that the FCS is covered.
- g. Where a university provides a fee waiver for masters or doctoral studies, the funds allocated for the fees will not accrue to the student, but will be made available as a research grant to cover running expenses of the postgraduate research project.
- h. Grantholders will be allowed to undertake teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstration duties to a maximum of 12 hours per week, during the year of study, and the student may be remunerated for his/her services rendered at the normal university tariff for services.

- i. Individuals that will be in a salaried (contractual or permanent) employment<sup>1</sup> that exceeds 12 hours per week, while pursuing honours, masters or doctoral studies may not hold NRF Postgraduate Funding for full-time studies.
- j. The grantholder must obtain the degree, for which the postgraduate funding was awarded, by the contractual date, which is within one (1) year after NRF funding has ceased, and must notify the NRF *via* the university DA of the completion of the degree.
- k. Should the grantholder not complete the degree for which the postgraduate funding was awarded, the total funds received from the NRF, must be returned to the NRF together with interest at the prevailing prime rate charged by the NRF bankers, unless a de-registration is approved by the NRF due to exceptional and extenuating circumstances.

---

<sup>1</sup> An "employee" will be understood in terms of Section 213 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 which is defined as (a) any person, excluding an independent contractor, who works for another person or for the State and who receives, or is entitled to receive, any remuneration; and (b) any other person who in any manner assists in carrying on or conducting the business of an employer, and "employed" and "employment" have meanings corresponding to that of "employee";

**It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that:**

- All attachments are translated into English as a medium of communication;
- A suitable supervisor and co-supervisor has been identified;
- In the case of first-time masters applicants, ensure that letters of support from the identified masters supervisor and referee are submitted via the NRF Online system;
- First-time doctoral applicants submit letters of support from the Masters Supervisor, identified doctoral supervisor and referee via the NRF Online system;
- The application is completed in full;
- They adhere to their institution's internal closing date; and
- The University has received the application.

**Relevant documents 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](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](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](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](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](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>

## 16. NRF Contact Persons

For enquiries, applicants' are encouraged to contact the Research or Postgraduate offices at their universities. Should there still be a need to contact the NRF, below are the contact persons and details:

***For General First-time Masters and Doctoral including DAAD related enquiries, please contact:***

Ms Kgaugelo Molepo: Professional Officer – HICD. Telephone: 012 481 4148.

Email Address: [kgaugelo.molepo@nrf.ac.za](mailto:kgaugelo.molepo@nrf.ac.za)

***For Masters and Doctoral Extension Support related enquiries, please contact:***

Ms Busisiwe Sibiya: Professional Officer – HICD. Telephone: 012 481 4166

Email Address: [busisiwe.sibiya@nrf.ac.za](mailto:busisiwe.sibiya@nrf.ac.za).

***For General Honours related enquiries, please contact:***

Mr Lehlogonolo Phaahla: Professional Officer – HICD. Telephone: 012 481 4315.

Email Address: [lehlogonolo.phaahla@nrf.ac.za](mailto:lehlogonolo.phaahla@nrf.ac.za)

***For SASAC related enquiries, please contact:***

Mr Nelson Komane: Professional Officer - HICD. Telephone: 012 481 4219.

Email Address: [nelson@nrf.ac.za](mailto:nelson@nrf.ac.za)

***For First-time SARChI Honours, Masters and Doctoral related enquiries, please contact:***

Ms Andisiwe Jukuda: Professional Officer – RCCE. Telephone: 012 481 4113.

Email Address: [andisiwe.jukuda@nrf.ac.za](mailto:andisiwe.jukuda@nrf.ac.za)

***For First-time CoEs Honours, Masters and Doctoral related enquiries, please contact:***

Ms Malekgotla Finger: Professional Officer – RCCE. Telephone: 012 481 4003.

Email Address: [malekgotla.finger@nrf.ac.za](mailto:malekgotla.finger@nrf.ac.za)

***For NRF-SARAO Postgraduate scholarships related enquiries, please contact:***

Annah Mashemola: Professional Officer, HCD, SARAO. Telephone: 012 442 2434.

Email Address: [amashemola@ska.ac.za](mailto:amashemola@ska.ac.za)