Funding Instrument: Sabbatical Grants to Complete Doctoral Degrees

Functional Domain: Grants Management & Systems Administration

Document: 2014 Funding Guide

March 2014

Abbreviations

CoG   Conditions of Grant

DA   Designated Authority

DST   Department of Science and Technology

DVC   Deputy Vice Chancellor

HICD   Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development

NRF   National Research Foundation

WBS   Work Breakdown Structure

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.   Introduction

In 2010, the National Research Foundation (NRF) introduced the 'Improving Academic Qualifications of Academic Staff and Researchers' funding instrument to accelerate the completion of doctoral degrees in order to increase the research and postgraduate supervisory capacity at universities and research institutions. With the allocation of additional funding by the Department of Science and Technology, this intervention is now being extended to a three-year instrument spanning the 2013 to 2015 academic years. This Call for *Sabbatical Grants to Complete Doctoral Degrees* therefore constitutes the third year (second cycle) of the above-mentioned funding instrument.

A once-off award will be made to full-time academic and research staff in order to free them of their teaching and administrative duties for a 6- or 12-month sabbatical. The objectives of this intervention are to –

- Accelerate the doctoral level training of full-time academic staff at public universities and research institutions;

- Improve the academic qualifications of employed academics to enhance research and supervisory capacity; and

- Effect a rapid transformation in the demographic composition of the emerging researcher community with respect to gender, race and persons with disabilities.

This Call is an invitation to public universities and research institutions to nominate eligible individuals for participation in this funding instrument.

This Funding Guide is intended to inform nominees of the operational procedures for applying for support in this funding instrument. It covers issues around eligibility criteria, application and review procedures, funding rules and reporting requirements.

It should be read in conjunction with the Implementation Framework: *Sabbatical Grants to Complete Doctoral Degrees* that forms part of the Call documentation. These can be accessed at http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php when the opening of the Call is announced. Applications must be submitted on the NRF Online Submission System, at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za by **nominated candidates.** These candidates must be in the process of completing the research for their doctoral studies and/or preparing a dissertation for examination. Nominations of candidates are submitted via the DVC: Research (or equivalent) prior to the opening of the Call.

2.   Eligibility

To qualify for support, applicants must comply with the following eligibility criteria. Applicants must be:

- Full-time academic employees engaged in research in any discipline and registered in doctoral programmes in public universities or research institutions in South Africa;
- Employed in a permanent position or on a full-time fixed-term appointment/ contract for the period of support;
- South African citizens;
- Expected to have no teaching related duties assigned to them during the six- or twelve month period of the sabbatical; and
- Nominated through the DVC: Research (or equivalent) of the employing institution.

3.   Institutional Responsibility

The institutional Designated Authority (DA) must:

- Ensure that the online applications are completed in full with all the necessary supporting documentation attached; and

- Validate and authorise all applications **of nominated candidates** submitted on the NRF Online Submission System.

4.   Nominations and Applications

4.1   Nomination Requirements

It is imperative that the Office of the DVC: Research (or equivalent) completes the requested information on the nomination form as attached to the Call for Nominations and return the completed nomination form to the NRF by latest **4 April 2014,** with each page initialled and fully signed. Only nominated candidates will be eligible to apply.

4.2   Application Requirements

The Call for Proposals will open on **7 April 2014 and close on 30 May 2014**. DAs of institutions have till 6 June 2014 to validate the applications. All applicants must apply through the NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za) and ensure that the following sections of the application are completed or updated:

- Registration Details.

- Applicant's details, contact information and academic/personal background. (All Sections from *"Contact Details"* to *"Articles in Non-refereed/Non-peer Reviewed Journals")*.

- Academic Information.

- Details of Research.

- Disability status if applicable.

- Research Project Plan.

- Institutional support – electronically requested via the application on the NRF Online Submission System

- Supervisor's report - electronically requested via the application on the NRF Online Submission System

- Attachments (compulsory)

  o Proof of registration; and

  o Proof of duration of full-time fixed-term appointment/contract of employment (if applicable).

The following applications **will not be** considered:

- Incomplete applications.
- Applications from candidates who have not been nominated by the DVC: Research (or equivalent) of their institution.
- Incomplete *Curriculum Vitae* on the NRF Online Submission System.
- Applications that do not include a Supervisor's Recommendation sent via the NRF Online Submission System process.

5. Funding

5.1 Funding Models

Funding will be provided for the financing of the sabbatical on the following models:

Funding period	NRF contribution	Allocation
6-month sabbatical	R100 000	80% for lecturer replacement
12-month sabbatical	R200 000	20% for thesis related costs (running expenses)

The sabbatical leave may commence at any time within 2015 starting from the day of receipt of notification of a successful application. All sabbatical leave must be completed by the end of 2016. Submission of thesis should not be made later than three months from the completion of the sabbatical leave.

Funding will be allocated to the successful candidates according to the demographic objectives of the funding instrument, i.e. 80% black and 60% female applicants.

5.2 Funding principle: Institution

There are no limits to the number of nominations an institution may submit, bearing in mind the NRF strategic objective of transforming the academic cohort with respect to the designated groups.

Lack of nominations from a given university or research institution may result in additional grants being allocated to other institutions. All awards will be based on the merit of individual applications.

5.3 Funding support for sabbatical awards

Awards may be utilised for the following line items and reported accordingly as per requirements in Section 6.3.

- 80% of the grant towards lecturer replacement; and
- 20% of the grant towards thesis' related expenses (running expenses) such as proofreading, binding, copying, editing etc.

The utilisation of funds will be audited according to standard NRF auditing procedures.

5.4   Institutional commitment

Whilst the institutions are not obligated to commit matching funding, they are required to:

- Allow the successful nominee time off equivalent to the duration of the grant; and

- Appoint suitable replacements in order to facilitate the uninterrupted work at the institution.

5.5   Multiple awards

Nominees that are selected as recipients of this once-off award may concurrently hold other grants from the NRF for the duration of this award.

5.6   Payment of grant

Awards will be paid to the organisation where the awardee is employed on receipt of the acceptance of Conditions of Grant (CoG), dully signed by the awardee and the DA.

6.   Evaluation Process

All applications for funding will be subjected to the following two-phased peer review process:

1. Internal screening; and
2. Panel peer-review of qualifying proposals.

6.1   Internal Screening

All applications, which were validated by institutions and submitted to the NRF, are screened by the NRF for compliance with the requirements of the Call for Proposals, the stipulations set out in this Funding Guide, and the content requirements indicated in the online application screens. If the criteria, described in detail, in this document, are not met, the applications will be rejected and will not be taken further into the evaluation process.

6.1.1 Screening of applications

Screening of applications will take place at two levels, namely the institution and the NRF. Firstly at the institutional level where institutions are required to conduct initial screening to ensure that the application meets the requirements as specified in the Call documents and,

that it carries the institutional endorsement. Secondly, an NRF internal screening will be undertaken when the applications are received by the NRF to ensure that all the required information has been submitted and that the application meets the eligibility criteria. Failure to meet all requirements will result in the application being rejected.

6.1.2 Panel peer-review

The NRF will constitute local Review Panels to evaluate the applications against the set criteria shown in the table below and make recommendations to the NRF on the merit of the nominations for funding.

6.1.3 Evaluation criteria

Scorecard for the evaluation of applications

Section 1: Work plan for completion of doctoral studies

Project Plan	Score
No/poor project plan: contains insufficient/no information regarding the activities and resources to carry out the research.	1
Incomplete project plan: contains very limited information of activities to carry out the research; no Work Breakdown Structure, no project organization, no project budget, and unrealistic timeframes and/or activities.	2
Complete project plan: include all the activities and resources required to conduct the research. The research project is considered to be achievable/feasible based on the information at hand.	3
Good project plan: strong proposal that contains a well-crafted project plan: availability of resources, including time, and appropriate alignment of human/ financial resources towards the project outcomes. The research project is highly achievable/feasible based on the information at hand.	4
Excellent project plan: contains outstanding project organisation, project schedule (Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)) with the work divided into manageable activities and linked to specific time-bound outcomes; project budget which lists the activities, costs and motivation towards efficient use of resources. Acknowledgements of any limitations. The research project and corresponding outputs should be achieved based on the information at hand.	5

Section 2: Research outputs

Research Outputs	Score
No indication of outputs to be produced.	1

Envisaged outputs listed but no indication of logical timeframes/unrealistic outputs.	2
Doctoral thesis and one manuscript will be submitted within 6 months of completion of sabbatical leave term.	3
Doctoral thesis and two manuscripts will be submitted within in the next 12 months of completion of sabbatical leave term.	4
Doctoral thesis and two manuscripts will be submitted within in the next 12 months of completion of sabbatical leave term. The applicant clearly indicated the title, content and targeting of high impact journals for publications.	5
TOTAL FOR SECTIONS 1 and 2	

6.2   Awarding

Two types of awards will be provided based on the length of the sabbatical, namely:

- Six-month award at a value of R100 000; and

- Twelve-month award at a value of R200 000.

In all cases funding will be provided to a single grantee to be used purely and exclusively for the financing of a sabbatical allowing for the completion of a doctoral degree.

Successful candidates will be required to sign a CoG which the outlines the terms and conditions of the award. An important condition to note is that applicants are required to spend the funding in the period for which the grant is intended. Any carry-forward of unspent funds to the next financial year will only be permitted under extenuating circumstances, e.g. ill health, and must be motivated in writing through the electronic Carry Forward process

6.3.   Reporting

With the view to continuously monitor project performance the grantholders are required to submit project reports. The NRF will use these reports to assess project performance against timeframes and deliverables as indicated in the project work plans. The purpose of reporting is to detect possible issues and to implement corrective measures timeously.

Two reporting periods are envisioned for this initiative so as to comply both with standard NRF reporting practices and the specific reporting expectation provided by the Department of Science and Technology (DST):

- A report on expenditure is to be submitted to the NRF within **three months** from the end of the funding/sabbatical period, detailing the exact use that was made of grant

monies provided as well as such funds as remain unspent and proof of submission of the thesis or university authorities for examination; and

- Within **one year** of the submission of the above expenditure report, proof must be provided to the NRF of the:

  o Submission of a doctoral thesis or dissertation to university authorities for examination; and

  o Publication of at least one article in an accredited academic or scientific journal;

  o Proof of the award of the Doctoral degree.

NB: If the stipulated conditions above are not met, the NRF reserves the right to request the awarded funding to be returned to the NRF.

7.   General

7.1   NRF-online Registration

Applicants must register on the NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za), and complete or update the CV section before completing the application.

7.2   Intellectual Property Rights

The intellectual capital generated by NRF funded research must be appropriately protected and exploited for the benefit of South Africa. This condition should not interfere with the intellectual property rights arrangements already made on condition that the majority of the benefits arising from the intellectual capital accrue to South Africa and its citizens. This condition is aligned with the *Intellectual Capital Act,* which will override this condition of grant.

7.3   Data Storage, Usage and Dissemination

Should the outputs of the research project not be protected, conscious plans need to be made to make the data available to the larger research community through existing databases, some of which can be specific to the research field and other generic fields.

7.4 Ethics

An awardee is required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards when conducting research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It remains the responsibility of the awardee leader to comply with all relevant regulations in this respect, including those laid down by the institution concerned. If the nominee is successful, the ethical clearance certificate, if applicable, has to be submitted to the NRF before any funds could be released.

NRF contacts for queries

For any queries related to the Call, process and management and administration of awards you may contact:

Director: GMSA
Ms Anthipi Pouris   Telephone: (012) 481 4240
               e-mail address: anthipi@nrf.ac.za

Professional Officer: GMSA
Ms Sushie Pillay   Telephone: (012) 481 4178
               e-mail address: ppillay@nrf.ac.za

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours on

        Tel: (012) 481 4034
        e-mail address: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za