



South African Radio Astronomy Observatory

Application Guide for SARAO Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowships for 2026

READ THE ENTIRE GUIDE BEFORE APPLYING FOR A SARAO FREESTANDING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

1. Eligibility for SARAO Postdoctoral Fellowships

1.1. Eligibility: Nationality

All nationalities

1.2. Eligibility: Commencement of SARAO Postdoctoral Fellowship

Successful applicants must be able to commence with their postdoctoral fellowship in South Africa on, or before, 1 October 2026.

1.3. Eligibility: Postgraduate and other Research

SARAO will consider applications from:

- Applicants who have been active in relevant research since obtaining their Doctoral degree. In the case of a break in research, an applicant must have obtained their Doctoral degree on, or after, 30 September 2021.
- Applicants who have postgraduate, and other research experience, which is relevant to radio astronomy or related engineering.

1.4. Eligibility: Postdoctoral Fellowship

SARAO will consider research project proposals that involve:

- Exploiting available data from key radio astronomy instruments located in South Africa, i.e. MeerKAT, HERA, and the HartRAO facilities (astronomical VLBI, astrometry and geodesy). Amongst these, MeerKAT is the highest priority. Note: Multi-wavelength projects with direct links to the above instruments may also be considered.

OR

- Engineering topics that are directly related to the needs of building and operating radio telescopes (antenna, receiver, signal processing, data analysis and data recording systems associated with radio telescopes and geodesy instruments; real-time digital signal processing instrumentation for radio astronomy; hardware and data analysis systems for detecting, monitoring and locating sources of Radio Frequency Interference (RFI), including the use of telescope data.

2. How to apply for a SARAO Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowship for the 2026 Academic Year

2.1. Application forms are accessible online at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>

2.2. Complete the PROFILE section first.

2.3. To access the application form, select MY APPLICATIONS, then Postdoctoral Grants, and then SARAO Postdoctoral Fellowships.

- 2.4. Applicants may only submit ONE application.
- 2.5. Applicants MUST upload all five required documents (see Section 3), in the Attachments Section of the application form. **IF ANY OF THESE FIVE DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ATTACHED TO YOUR APPLICATION, SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION.**
- 2.6. Your application must be supported by at least two letters of reference (see Section 4). **IF YOUR APPLICATION IS NOT SUPPORTED BY TWO LETTERS OF REFERENCE SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION**
- 2.7. Once you submit your application, it will automatically be routed to the institution where you are applying to study.
- 2.8. In order for your application to be considered for 2026 funding, you must submit your application on or before the cut-off date. It is YOUR responsibility to check the application closing date with the university's Research or Postgraduate office.

3. Supporting Documents to be Attached to your Application Form

You MUST upload **ALL FIVE** documents listed below, in the **Attachments Section** of the application form.

IF ANY OF THESE DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ATTACHED, SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION!!!!

Document	Details
1. Identity Document or Passport	- For South African citizens and permanent residents: A copy of your South African ID - For non-South Africans: A copy of your passport
2. University Results	- All your university academic results, from the start of your university studies until now, and where relevant for all other degrees completed to date. - Please attach all your results as ONE PDF Document
3. An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae	
4. Supervisor/host-agreement letter	- The South African-based supervisor/host of your postdoctoral fellowship must provide you with a signed letter, on a university letterhead, stating that he/she has agreed to supervise/host you for the postdoctoral fellowship.
5. Letter of Motivation	- The motivation is CRITICAL to the review of your application. Take the time to draft an excellent motivation! - You must provide a letter of about 1000 words motivating why you should be awarded a SARAO Postdoctoral Fellowship.

4. Letters of Reference

Your application must be supported by **AT LEAST TWO** letters of reference. Please ask at least two academic/faculty/research referees to submit letters of reference to study.research@sarao.ac.za, before 31 August 2025. Please ask the referees to include the following information in their letter of reference:

- The capacity in which the referee knows the applicant, and for how long they have known the applicant.
- The applicant's research capabilities in terms of attitude, initiative, understanding of the subject, progress against deliverables, publications etc.
- Any other relevant comments regarding applicant.

5. Structure and Funding Levels for SARAO Freestanding Postdoctoral fellowship for 2026

- 5.1. The postdoctoral fellowship level for 2026 is R476,826. The fellowship amount is supplemented by a travel grant of R67,000 per annum, and a once-off equipment grant of R40 000 for the duration of the fellowship.
- 5.2. There is no relocation grant linked to SARAO postdoctoral fellowships.
- 5.3. The duration of a SARAO postdoctoral fellowship is three years.

6. Enquiries regarding SARAO Freestanding Doctoral Scholarships

Contact: study.research@sarao.ac.za