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Framework & Funding Guide for the DSTI/NRF- SASOL Foundation Research Chair in Development Studies

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## **1. Strategic Background**

### **1.1. Context**

The need for South Africa to transform its workforce in Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) has long been recognized in national policy. Earlier frameworks, such as the National Research and Development Strategy (2002) and the White Paper on Science and Technology (1996), highlighted the importance of developing a skilled and diverse SET workforce. More recently, the Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Decadal Plan (2022)—building on the vision set out in the 2019 White Paper on STI—has reaffirmed this priority. It emphasizes two key objectives: advancing research and strengthening the National System of Innovation (NSI), while ensuring that research delivers tangible solutions to South Africa’s socio-economic challenges.

In order to achieve the abovementioned goal, the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) was established in 2006 by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI). This funding instrument is managed by the National Research Foundation (NRF) through a contractual agreement with the DSTI. SARChI is a strategic intervention of the South African government designed to attract and retain research excellence and innovation at South African public universities, Research Councils and National Research Facilities. In particular, SARChI is aimed at increasing scientific research capacity through the development of human capacity and stimulating the generation of new knowledge. SARChI is also intended to support and advance transformation of the South African society in terms of demographics and the knowledge economy, so that there is equitable and inclusive participation in the generation of knowledge and that the generation of such knowledge translates into socio-economic benefits.

### **1.2. Research Chair in Development Studies**

The Sasol Foundation, in collaboration with the National Research Foundation is seeking to establish a Research Chair in Development Studies to enhance strategies and tools for monitoring and evaluating Sasol’s education and Social Impact (SI) interventions, while also assessing their long-term efficacy and impact on beneficiaries and communities. Development Studies being inherently multi-disciplinary, explore the complex interactions

between social, economic, political, technological, ecological, cultural, and gendered aspects of societal change at the local, national, regional, and global levels (Summer, 2022). The appointment of a Research Chair in this field is crucial to bringing specialised expertise in evaluating the impact of development programmes particularly those targeted for Sasol's fenceline communities, i.e., communities where Sasol has operations.

Sasol invests substantially in programmes that drive socio-economic growth and enhance the overall well-being of individuals and communities where it operates. These evidence-based initiatives are aimed at building social equity, creating sustainable communities, and improving livelihoods in fenceline areas. Sasol SI initiatives are framed around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) as well as the national and local priorities. Key initiatives include education and skills development programmes, community infrastructure, community development and environmental interventions, infrastructure development, and enterprise development programmes.

## **2. Aims and Objectives of SARChI**

The main aim of SARChI Chairs is to strengthen and improve research and innovation capacity of public universities in order to produce high quality postgraduate students and research outputs. The objectives remains as follows:

- Expand the scientific research and innovation capacity of South Africa;
- Improve South Africa's international research and innovation competitiveness, while responding to social, economic and transformation imperatives of the country;
- Attract and retain excellent researchers and scientists;
- Increase the production of Masters and Doctoral graduates; and
- Create research career pathways for young and mid-career researchers, with a strong research, innovation and human capital development output trajectory.

## **3. Guiding Principles**

The following principles will inform the awarding of the SARChI Chairs:

- Applications for the Research Chair is administered through a directed Open Call accessible to all public institutions of higher education in South Africa. Each university may nominate a candidate/s who will submit an application separately.
- While all demographic groups may apply, preference will be given to females and Blacks, in particular African South Africans and Coloured candidates because they are grossly underrepresented in the SARChI Funding Instrument.
- There will be no pre allocation of Chairs. All applications will be subjected to the same robust two stage peer-review and adjudication processes for the SARChI.
- The institution may nominate and submit applications from eligible candidates from abroad, specifically females of any race or Africans and Black South Africans of any gender in the diaspora. Applicants from abroad will only be considered for a Tier 1 Research Chair and must be willing to spend 50% of their time at the South African university.
- Each application for the Research Chair must be in alignment with the university's Research Strategy, and its Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training;
- The Chair-holder will be expected to dedicate at least 80% of their time conducting research and in the process supervising an average of 10 Masters and Doctoral students per annum as well as mentoring Emerging Researchers or postdoctoral fellows. Demographics of postgraduate students supervised by the Chair must be aligned to the NRF Student policy.
- Research Chairs are tenable at Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels.
- Candidates appointed without an NRF rating are encouraged and required to get rated within the first funding cycle.

#### **4. Accountability for Chairs**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research at the South African host university will be directly accountable for the Research Chair. The chair will fit into the normal management structures of the host institution and will report in consultation with the Dean(s) and Head of Department, directly to the DVC of Research.

#### **5. Profile and Minimum Requirements of Candidates**

1. The candidate must have a doctoral qualification in the relevant field

2. The candidate must be at least an Associate Professor<sup>1</sup> at the time of application
3. Must be an established researcher that is at least recognised nationally in their respective research field
4. Must have an extensive research profile, including peer-reviewed journal articles and other recognised knowledge outputs
5. Must have an extensive student supervision record and the ability to attract, recruit and train postgraduate students in the field of study that they are applying for.

## **6. Research Areas and scope**

The proposed Research Chair is aimed at providing comprehensive, long-term evaluation of Sasol's education and Social Impact programmes to effectively assess their impact. The Chair is envisaged to provide deeper understanding of how Sasol's initiatives impact beneficiaries such as learners, students, schools, institutions, small businesses, communities, and the broader society, particularly Sasol's fenceline communities. The aim is for the research to provide data-driven insights and recommendations to improve the design and implementation of Sasol's interventions and contribute to towards development of sustainable programmes that can be implemented at scale, thus influence policy and practice.

The objectives of this Chair include:

- Establishing robust frameworks and methodologies for continuous monitoring and evaluations of Sasol's programmes.
- Tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) over extended periods to observe trends and long-term effects.
- Developing evidence-based decision-making and recommendations to influence policy and practice and support the scaling of successful models.
- Communicate findings to the broader public through reports, academic publications, conferences, and media to ensure that research findings are translated into policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Candidates that are still applying for professorship at their respective institutions should not apply until these have been approved.

The Research Chair will also undertake longitudinal studies to track impact over time and in real time. **The key areas of focus of research will include the following :**

**a) Quality Education**

**i. Quality and Access in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE)**

While Sasol has made strides in improving access to ECDE services in its fenceline communities, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of ECDE interventions in South Africa and their long-term impact on children's development and educational outcomes, particularly for children from low-income households, the primary focus of Sasol's ECDE initiatives. Research studies assessing the effectiveness of Sasol's recently established Affordable Gold Standard (AGS) model for ECDE will be crucial in shaping policy and practice. The Sasol AGS model, endorsed by the Department of Basic Education, is designed for nationwide replication to enhance access to and quality of early learning across the country.

**ii. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education**

Since the Sasol Foundation's inception in 2008, various interventions have focused on strengthening teacher capacity, providing learner support, and developing teaching and learning resources for STEM subjects. The impact of several projects has been widely recognized, particularly during critical moments. Notable examples include the authoring of textbooks and workbooks, which saved the Department of Basic Education millions of rands during the textbook shortage crisis. Additionally, the Sasol Mobile Science Laboratory programme has had a significant impact in rural communities, where resources for hands-on science education are limited.

However, there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of other programmes related to teacher development and learner support. Several new initiatives aimed at enhancing STEM education are also in the pipeline. These include career education, psychosocial support for learners, and teacher education designed to strengthen InterSen Phase Mathematics and Science. Like the AGS model for ECDE, these programmes require careful design and the integration of monitoring and evaluation to ensure they deliver the intended outcomes.

**iii. Transition from Basic to Higher Education**

The recent baseline assessment commissioned by Sasol has raised significant concerns about fenceline communities, revealing that only an average of 25% of learners pursue further studies after matric. This is in stark contrast to Sasol's educational goal of developing human capital in the fields of engineering, science, and technology within these communities, not only to increase participation in Sasol's value chain but also to cultivate a skilled future workforce. Tracking the transition of learners, particularly those from our fenceline communities, from secondary to tertiary education is essential for identifying factors that hinder successful progression. By addressing these barriers, we can develop strategies to support learners through this critical phase, reduce dropout rates, and increase participation in higher education among Sasol's fenceline youth.

#### **iv. Transition from Higher Education into Employment and Entrepreneurship**

Over the years, Sasol has made significant contributions to South Africa's agenda to increase access to tertiary education for marginalized groups through university bursaries and scholarships. A substantial number of beneficiaries have successfully completed their degrees and are now actively contributing to the growth of the South African economy. There is a valuable opportunity to track and communicate the real impact of Sasol's investment on the lives of these beneficiaries.

#### **v. Building Technical & Vocational skills**

The Research Chair will play a crucial role in tracking learners who are beneficiaries of Sasol's Technical Education programmes to determine whether they continue to pursue vocational pathways in their post school/tertiary education. Additionally, the Chair will monitor Sasol's contribution to the Department of Education's three-streams model by assessing the uptake of specific trades and specializations in Engineering and related disciplines at TVET colleges and Universities of Technology.

There are additional programmes in development aimed at advancing technical and vocational education, including the conceptualization of a Technical Teacher Training Institute. If realized, this initiative could have a significant impact on the technical education sector. This programme will benefit from the activities of the proposed Research Chair, ensuring that its design is informed by the best practices and research insights.

#### **vi. Digital Education and Innovation**

The Foundation is introducing various digital education and innovation initiatives across its programmes. It is crucial to explore and integrate these digital and innovative technologies and solutions, particularly in under-resourced areas. Assessing their effectiveness and scaling successful models will enhance access to and the quality of education. By addressing these gaps, the proposed Research Chair in Development Studies will provide valuable insights and practical solutions to enhance the educational landscape in South Africa, contributing to national development goals and global educational priorities.

#### **vii. Aligning programmes with Local, National, and Global priorities**

There is a need to better align Sasol's education programmes with local needs (particularly Sasol fenceline communities), as well as national and global targets, such as the SDG goals. Evaluating their impact and contributing to international best practices for sustainable education will be a focus of this Research Chair, helping to close this alignment gap.

#### **b) Bridge to Work Programme**

Bridge to Work (BtW) is an employability programme designed to support unemployed individuals from Sasol's fenceline communities, with a particular focus on empowering youth and women. The programme aims to equip participants with essential skills that will enable them to either secure employment or successfully launch their own businesses. Key areas of focus include Artisan Development, Agriculture, Renewable Energy, Business Development, and Digital Services, among others. The BtW programme was launched in 2021, with interventions progressively phased in to maximize impact, fostering sustainable growth and economic resilience within Sasol's fenceline communities. The programme will benefit from enhancement of its monitoring and evaluation tools for measuring impact on individual beneficiaries and communities.

The scope of research for the BtW programme will include evaluating current initiatives to measure their impact on individual beneficiaries and communities, as well as developing

robust quantitative and qualitative tools to assess the programme's overall effectiveness. A key priority will be identifying potential economic opportunities linked to BtW interventions in the regions where they are implemented. This will involve economic analyses to determine the relevance and potential benefits of specific programmes by region, ensuring that resources are allocated strategically. For instance, applying a one-size-fits-all approach across regions may be less effective than tailoring interventions to meet local needs based on research findings.

### **c) Community Infrastructure, Environment and Community Development Programmes**

Sasol operates in underdeveloped communities with low levels of service delivery, impacting on access to community services, livelihoods and health and safety. Local municipalities are unable to adequately services and infrastructure although mandated to do so. In light of this Sasol aims to deliver relevant, impactful, and sustainable community interventions that benefit fenceline communities, including infrastructure, community development and environment aimed at providing quality services such as healthcare, water, sanitation, electricity and the reduction of safety risks. Sasol is also committed to addressing the impact of communities on the environment. Aligning these initiatives with Sasol's low carbon energy transition roadmap will mitigate the impact on fenceline communities and municipalities, thereby reducing social risk and the effects of municipal weaknesses on business operations.

Sasol's community infrastructure, community development and environmental programmes is a lever to the reduction of the inequality gap caused by a lack of access to critical infrastructure, services delivery, living conditions, health, safety and community amenities, while addressing Sasol's future business needs. Sasol has been implementing these programmes for a number of years; however impact tracking and evaluation has not been conducted before, and the proposed Research Chair aims to fill this gap, providing valuable insights and contributing to the broader body of knowledge on effectiveness of interventions. The proposed Research Chair will therefore undertake longitudinal studies to track the impact of the programmes on communities, municipalities, and other beneficiaries. These studies will also monitor the progression of current programmes and projects as they move through the various stages of implementation and post implementation.

**d) Sasol for Good (Sasol's Employee Volunteer Programme)**

Sasol for Good (SFG) is Sasol's Employee Volunteering and Financial Contribution programme, launched in July 2015. SFG creates an avenue to leverage the considerable, diverse abilities and expertise of our employees to become more involved in volunteering causes to empower fenceline communities and co-create sustainable livelihoods. For Sasol to deliver on its Social Value Strategy it is crucial to empower and mobilise employees to become actively involved in society through SFG.

Sasol has more than 20 000 employees in South Africa, but only around 300 employees are making use of the payroll giving opportunity, where Sasol matched the employee's contribution. SFG also provides the opportunity for employees to do fundraising campaigns for beneficiaries of their choice, but there is less than 5 of these fundraising campaigns. per annum. In addition, employees qualify for 40 hours volunteering leave annually, but the uptake is also very low. As Sasol has been implementing SFG programmes since 2015, impact tracking and evaluation has not been conducted before, and the proposed Research Chair aims to fill this gap, providing valuable insights and contributing to the broader body of knowledge on effectiveness of interventions. The proposed Research Chair will therefore undertake studies to determine gaps in the SFG approach and to identify measures to improve employee uptake and participation in SFG.

**7. Application, Review and Selection Process**

The SARChI applicants who are established researchers and meet the minimum requirements as outlined above must submit an application that include: (i) the suitability of a candidate for appointment to the Research Chair position; (ii) a research and activity plan with concomitant budget drafted by the applicant, (iii) a letter of endorsement from the institution. All applications must be endorsed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) of Research. The proposal must be led by the institution with technical aspects authored by the proposed nominated candidate and approved by the institution to submit to the NRF. The application should give details on:

- I. The readiness and commitment of the institution to provide an enabling environment to ensure the success of the Research Chair;

- II. Strengths, capabilities, strategic environment and competencies of the institution;
- III. The alignment of the proposed Research Chair with the proposed thematic area and the strategic plan of the institution;
- IV. The potential of the proposed Research Chair to enhance the international research and/or innovation competitiveness within the discipline;
- V. The potential of the research to impact on transformation, the social and/or economic development of the country;
- VI. The research focus of the Research Chair;
- VII. A proposed plan on how the Research Chair will fulfil SARChI objectives, including the strategic considerations mentioned in the proposal; and
- VIII. Specific objectives, outputs and outcomes for the five-year period.

**Candidate(s)<sup>2</sup> must use the NRF online system, NRF Connect (<https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/>) to register and/or update her/his *curriculum vitae* and complete the application.**

The selection of candidates will be based on the merit of each candidate's full research proposal. This will include the strength of the candidate's profile, including his/her qualifications and experience, knowledge outputs in the discipline of the Research Chair and postgraduate student supervision track record. This will also include an assessment of the candidate's research and activity plan in respect of their ability to deliver on SARChI objectives, as well as the proposed budget.

The full proposal must also give specific details on:

- Proposed teaching<sup>3</sup> to research time ratio;
- Research objectives for the first five year period;

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<sup>2</sup> No commitment should be given to the candidate(s) by the university before the NRF has officially informed the university of the Award by means of a review panel outcomes letter.

<sup>3</sup> Teaching of postgraduate students only. Note: Chair-holders may not spend more than 20% of their time on undergraduate teaching and/or management responsibilities not related to activities of the Research Chair.

- Expected knowledge<sup>4</sup> outputs in the first five year period;
- Expected human capital<sup>5</sup> outputs in the first five year period; and
- Existing and planned collaborations in the first five-year period.

### 7.1. Review and Selection process

Proposals submitted by candidates will be reviewed via a two-tier process, namely; postal peer reviews by subject specific experts with relevant expertise in the respective applications' research area and panel reviews comprising of individuals from broad disciplines covering the directed and thematic areas identified for this call for SARCHI applications. The review panels comprising of individuals from broad disciplines will draw on the expert reviewers' written feedback and make recommendations to the NRF for the approval of research programmes and plans and on the suitability of the candidate for appointment as a SARCHI Chair. Such review panels will be comprised of respected individuals with knowledge and insights of the Higher Education System and the NSI and will consider the recommendations of the review panels and select the Research Chairs to be awarded taking into account the strategic objectives of SARCHI and the transformation needs of the sector.

### 7.2. Award levels

Following the peer-review of the full proposal and the *curriculum vitae* of the candidate, Chairs may be approved at the Tier 1 or Tier 2 level. Tier 1 is for Chairs who are Established Researchers and are recognised internationally as leaders in their respective fields and have received substantial international recognition for their research contributions. Tier 2 are for Chairs that are established and recognised nationally in their respective fields and are likely to be upgraded to tier 1 in one or two funding cycles. The criteria that must be met by nominated candidates for approval at the Tier 1 level is detailed in Table 5 below. An added advantage for a candidate to be recommended at a Tier 1 level, would be that the candidate must be typically an A or B rated researcher. Chairs who meet the Tier level criteria but are not rated at the time of application, must be rated within the first five (5) year funding cycle.

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<sup>4</sup> Peer-reviewed journal articles, peer-reviewed conference proceedings, scholarly books and book chapters, patents, invited keynote presentations, conference presentations etc.

<sup>5</sup> Numbers of Masters and Doctoral graduates and completed postdoctoral fellowships.

**Table 1: Criteria for Tier levels**

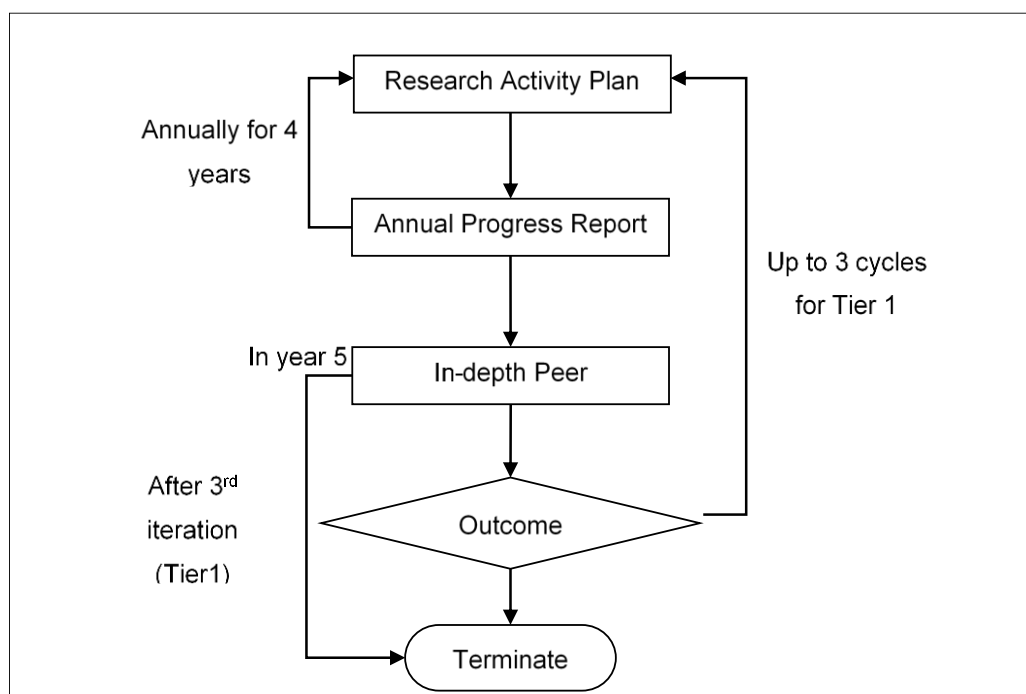
| Tier 1 Research Chairs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Tier 2 Research Chairs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be appointable at the level of a full Professor benchmarked nationally;</li> <li>• Should be an outstanding and innovative researcher whose accomplishments have made a major impact in their field;</li> <li>• Should be recognised internationally as an undisputed leader in their field and/or have received substantial international recognition for their research contributions;</li> <li>• Should have a superior record in attracting and successfully supervising post-graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, taking into account the practices of the field; and</li> <li>• Should reside full time in South Africa for the duration of the Research Chair award. Candidates from abroad, specifically African scholars and Black South Africans in the diaspora that are willing to spend at least 50% of their time within South Africa are eligible for consideration.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be appointable at the level of an Associate Professor or full Professor benchmarked nationally;</li> <li>• Should be an established researcher, with a strong research, innovation and human capital development output trajectory;</li> <li>• Should have the potential to achieve substantial international recognition for their research contributions in the next five to ten years;</li> <li>• Should have demonstrated the ability to attract and successfully supervise postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows; and</li> <li>• Should reside full-time in South Africa for the duration of the Research Chair award. Candidates from abroad, specifically African scholars and Black South Africans in the diaspora willing to reside full-time in South Africa for the duration of the Chair are eligible for consideration.</li> </ul> |

## 8. Management of the Research Chairs

This section of the Framework and Funding Guide for Applications describes what follows after the Research Chair has been awarded to the institution.

The NRF will require the approved candidate for the Chair to enter into a five year performance agreement in the form of 'Conditions of Grant' and will evaluate the performance of the Chair against the research plan, stated objectives and targets. The plan will be reviewed every five years. Subject to satisfactory performance by the Research Chair following the 5-year in-depth review, the grant may be renewed for up to 2 more 5-year cycles for Tier 1 Chairs and one more 5 year cycle for Tier 2. At the end of each financial year the incumbent will be required to submit to the NRF a Progress Report (PR) addressing the milestones and expected outcomes as presented in the research activity plan of the application.

During year five, of the five-year funding cycle, the Research Chair will be subjected to an in-depth evaluation undertaken by peers following the framework set out in the SARChI Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.



**Figure 1: Management of the Research Chair over the tenure of a Research Chair**

### 8.1. Duration of the Research Chair

After the Chair is awarded, Tier 1 Research Chairs will be tenable for five years, renewable for two further five-year cycles giving a total lifespan of 15 years, subject to satisfactory performance by the Chair following each five year in-depth review. Tier 2 is tenable for two five year cycles, giving it a total lifespan of 10 years. However, Tier 2 Research Chairs

can apply for an upgrade to Tier 1 at the first or second five year review. Eligibility for renewal will be entirely based on the performance of the incumbent.

## 8.2. Funding Levels

SARChI funding instrument provides initial awards of R3 000 000 for Tier 1 Chairs and R2 000 000 for Tier 2 Chairs. The award covers salaries; postdoctoral fellowships; research operating costs; research equipment & infrastructure, and overheads for the host institution. The guidelines for apportioning of the grant across these categories and the values of fellowships and scholarships are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Budget guide for Research Chairs**

| <b>Budget category</b>               | <b>Sub-item</b>                                | <b>Cost/person/annum</b>      | <b>Minimum number of people</b> | <b>Maximum number of people</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Salaries                             | Chair                                          | Tier 1                        | 1                               | 1                               |
|                                      | Admin support                                  | Up to 32% of budget           | 1                               | 1                               |
|                                      | Research assistants                            | Tier 2<br>Up to 34% of budget |                                 | 3                               |
| Fellowships                          | Post-doctoral fellow<br><b>Research cost</b>   | 320 000<br><b>50 000</b>      | 2                               |                                 |
| Research equipment or infrastructure | Up to R400 000                                 |                               |                                 |                                 |
| Running                              | At discretion of Chairholder depending on need |                               |                                 |                                 |
| University Overhead                  | Up to 5% of budget                             |                               |                                 |                                 |

### 8.2.1. Budget line items

#### Research Equipment

The goal is to provide support to Chairs for the purchase of small research equipment, contributing to the purchase of large equipment, covering the maintenance, service or upgrade costs for equipment or hiring of equipment.

#### Eligibility

- Details of laboratory equipment to be purchased, e.g. water bath, autoclave, water purification system or gel dryer.
- Details of the contribution to the purchase of large equipment, e.g. shipping and customs.
- If the funds are not used to purchase equipment, they can be used to cover equipment maintenance / service / upgrade costs, to enable research to be carried out on the SARChI project,

**the following:**

- Detailed description of the equipment, e.g. (camera or tape recorder for data capturing purposes);
- Details of the specific maintenance or service or upgrade.
- A motivation for specialised hardware, e.g. audio-visual equipment, and specialised software.
- If more than one item of a particular piece of equipment is purchased, a motivation per application should be provided.
- Maintenance costs, for new equipment that is purchased with NRF funding, must be budgeted for (if not requested in this application).
- Equipment must be purchased in accordance with the institutional procurement policies.

**Exclusions**

- Personal laptops, notepads, hand-held notebooks, and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices.
- Licence fees or renewals of licences of non-specialised software (e.g. MS Office).

All research equipment purchased through this Grant shall be registered in the Chairholder's Institution asset register according to the policies of the Institution, and shall remain the property of the Institution on completion of the Grant.

**Overheads**

Up to 5% of the annual grant may be used to cover indirect costs of the Research Chair, and may be used at the discretion of the institution for whatever purpose it deems appropriate.

It is important to note that Table 2 provides a budget guide that states the minimum and maximum amounts per budget category and has the flexibility for the Chair to allocate the SARChI grant based on the research activity plan. The proposed budget will be approved at the commencement of each five-year funding cycle. The incumbent will be given an opportunity, at the end of each calendar year, to make budget adjustments for the subsequent year, in consultation with the South African Research Chairs Initiative unit of the NRF.

Tier 1 Chairs will not be eligible for additional NRF parliamentary core grant funding. Incumbents must apply for grants for large equipment (above R400k) through the NRF Infrastructure Funding Instrument. The Chairs are therefore strongly encouraged to attract additional funding for research and human capital development from other national and international funders and donors to supplement the SARChI grant.

## **9. Postgraduate Student Funding Policy**

In 2021, the NRF implemented the *DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding Policy* wherein postgraduate funding allocations are underpinned by the principles of equity of opportunity; representivity; prioritisation; and enhanced access, success and throughput. The *DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student 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 are considered in the allocation of funding, with transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Financial need is included as a criterion for determining the level of funding. To attract and retain a diverse range of students, funding levels cover the full cost of study for students who meet the required criteria.

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

- **For first-time honours funding** - A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study;
- **For first-time master's funding** - A minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level OR a minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate diploma OR a minimum average of 65% for all final year subjects of a four-year degree; and
- **For first-time doctoral funding** - A minimum of 65% at the master's level.

South African citizens or permanent resident applicants who have **graduated from 2021 academic year with a classification of Pass will not be allowed to apply in the current call**, only applicants with a numerical pass mark may apply for NRF funding. However the following individuals will be allowed to apply without a numerical mark:

- South African citizens or permanent residents who graduated prior to 2021 academic year with a 'Pass' and 'Pass with a distinction'. Applicants with a 'Pass' should enter the 'Pass' under the academic achievement section of the application form, and those with 'Pass with a distinction' should enter 75%;
- South African citizens or permanent residents with a 'Pass with distinction'. These applicants should enter 75% mark in the application form; and
- International applicants applying for masters and doctoral scholarships. These applicants should enter a 'Pass' in the application form.

The eligibility criteria for funding at Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS) listed in Table 3 apply to all first-time applicants for honours, master's and doctoral funding.

**Table 3: Eligibility criteria for first time applicants for the DSI/NRF Student Funding for FCS and PCS**

| Study level | Full Cost of Study                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                         | Partial Cost of Study                                                                   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             | Exceptional Achievers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Financially Needy and Applicants with a Disability                                      | Other                                                                                   |
| Honours     | Average of $\geq 75\%$ mark for major subjects in the final year of undergraduate study                                                                                                                                                                                     | Average of $\geq 65\%$ mark for major subjects in the final year of undergraduate study | Average of $\geq 65\%$ mark for major subjects in the final year of undergraduate study |
|             | <b>Applicants for honours funding</b> must be <b>28</b> years of age or younger in the year of application i.e. applicants <b>must not be over 28 years</b> by 31 December 2025. Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible for honours scholarships. |                                                                                         |                                                                                         |

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Master's</b> | Minimum average of 75% for all subjects at the honours level;<br><br><b>OR</b><br>Minimum average of 75% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma level;<br><br><b>OR</b><br>Minimum average of 75% for final year subjects of a four-year degree | Minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level;<br><br><b>OR</b><br>Minimum average of 65% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma;<br><br><b>OR</b><br>Minimum average of 65% for final year subjects of a four-year degree | Minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level;<br><br><b>OR</b><br>Minimum average of 65% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma;<br><br><b>OR</b><br>Minimum average of 65% for final year subjects of a four-year degree |
|                 | <b>Applicants for master's funding</b> must be <b>30</b> years of age or younger in the year of application i.e. applicants <b>must not be over 30 years</b> by 31 December 2025.                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Doctoral</b> | Minimum average of 75% for Master's degree                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Minimum average of 65% for Master's degree                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Minimum average of 65% for Master's degree                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                 | <b>Applicants for doctoral funding</b> must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application i.e. applicants must not be over 32 years by 31 December 2025.                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

Only South African citizens and permanent residents who are either financially needy, living with a disability or exceptional academic achievers are eligible for FCS. Applicants that are eligible for FCS can be awarded at PCS due to budget constraints. The NRF reserves the right not to make an award or adjust a grant under any circumstances from PCS to FCS. The PCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens, permanent residents and 5% of international students.

The entry age requirement is 28, 30 and 32 years for honours, master's and doctoral studies respectively, in the year of application, regardless of first year of registration. For more information on the student policy, please go onto the NRF Connect.

## 10. Evaluation and Impact of Research Chairs

A baseline study of Research Chairs, their institutional and intellectual environments will be conducted with each round of new awards. These studies, together with the

universities' Strategic Research Plans and the Research Chair's activity plan, will serve as the baseline to evaluate impact on the discipline and at the institutional level.

## **11. Ethical Clearance**

It is the responsibility of the grant holder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research in accordance with institutional ethical policies and procedures. The ethical clearance approval should be held by the institution and the grant holder and accessible on request, if necessary. Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/>.

## **12. NRF Contact Persons**

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