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DSTI-NRF POSTGRADUATE FUNDING POLICY AND 2027 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Updated: March 2026

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Acronyms

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSTI	Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
DSTI	Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
FCS	Full Cost of Study
FCS	Full Cost of Study
ISFAP	Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme
ISFAP	Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PCS	Partial Cost of Study
PCS	Partial Cost of Study
SADC	Southern African Development Community
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STEM	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
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UID	Unique Identification Number
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DSTI (Department of Science, Technology and Innovation) – NRF (National Research Foundation) Postgraduate Funding Policy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The NRF implemented the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy, that uses postgraduate student funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success and throughput, for the first time in the year 2021. The purpose is to retain high academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level, as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of researchers and academics to sustain South Africa's knowledge enterprise.

This document answers FAQs related to the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy and the 2025 Call for applications. This document should be read in conjunction with the Application and Funding Framework. These FAQs will be updated from time to time, and the updated FAQs will be posted on the NRF website (www.nrf.ac.za). Should you have further questions that are not addressed here please send an email to postgraduatequeries@risa.nrf.ac.za for a response.

Application Process

1. How do I apply for NRF Postgraduate funding?

Applications for funding must be made through the NRF Connect system on https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/. The call for applications opens between April/May annually. All applications will be reviewed at the university and only applications that meet all the eligibility requirements will be submitted by the university to the NRF for funding considerations.

2. When are the opening and the closing date for submission of applications for NRF postgraduate funding in 2026?

Level of study	Opening dates	Closing dates
Honours (General)	**7 July 2026**	**23 November 2026**
NRF-SARAO Honours	**May 2026**	**August 2026**
First-time Master's	**1 April 2026**	**3 July 2026**
First-time Doctoral		**3 July 2026**
Master's and Doctoral Extension Support		**14 August 2026**

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3. Where can I find all the current call documents for the NRF Postgraduate Scholarships?

All call documents can be downloaded from NRF Connect.

Eligibility Criteria

4. Which postgraduate degrees will be funded?

Postgraduate student funding will be made for full-time honours, master's, and doctoral degrees only. Refer to question 38 -39 for exclusions.

5. What is the minimum academic requirement for NRF postgraduate funding?

A student must obtain:

- A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study for honours funding.
- A minimum average of 65% at the honours level or final year of a four-year degree for master's funding; and
- A minimum of 65% at the master's level for doctoral funding.

6. If a student does not have a numerical mark indicated in their academic record, will the NRF fund such a student?

Only applicants with a numerical pass mark may apply for NRF funding. Exceptions will be made for:

- South African citizens or permanent residents who graduated prior to 2021 academic year with a 'Pass' and 'Pass with a distinction';
- South African citizens or permanent residents with a 'Pass with distinction'; and
- International applicants' applying for master's and doctoral scholarships.
- South African citizens with international qualifications applying for master's and doctoral scholarships.

Refer to the Application and Funding Framework for more details.

7. What is the minimum academic requirement for students that are financially needy or living with a disability to be eligible for Full Cost of Study (FCS) funding by NRF?

A student must obtain:

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- A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study for honours funding.
- A minimum average of 65% at the honours level or final year of a four-year degree for master's funding; and
- A minimum of 65% at the master's level for doctoral funding.

Note: For applicants currently completing a prior qualification, eligibility will be assessed using the latest available results. Only applicants meeting the 65% threshold in these results will be considered. Scholarship offers may be revoked if the required minimum is not achieved upon completion of the prior qualification

8. What is the minimum academic requirement for students to be considered as exceptional academic achievers for FCS funding by the NRF?

A student who obtains:

- A minimum average of 75% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study for honours funding.
- A minimum average of 75% at the honours level or final year of a four-year degree for master's funding; and
- A minimum of 75% (or cum laude) at the master's level for doctoral funding.

9. Will international students that are exceptional academic achievers or living with a disability be eligible for FCS funding?

No, students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the rest of the world will only qualify for PCS funding.

10. Does the age limit for NRF postgraduate students funding apply across all NRF funding programmes?

No, the age limit is no longer applicable to all students applying for the NRF postgraduate funding. Applicants of all age groups may apply

The NRF has introduced a:

10.1. "No age restriction" category and 20% of the funding would be allocated to students in this category; and

10.2. "Age restriction" category and 80% of the funding would be allocated to students in this category:

a. Approved students for honours funding must be 28 years or younger in the year of application, i.e., applicants must not be older than 28 years by 31 December 2026.

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b. Approved students for master's funding must be 30 years or younger in the year of application, i.e., applicants must not be older than 30 years by 31 December 2026; and

c. Approved students for doctoral funding must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application, i.e., applicants must not be older than 32 years by 31 December 2026.

11. How did the NRF come up with the prescribed age restrictions?

The average completion age for an undergraduate degree as published by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was 21 years. In addition, the NRF analysed a cohort of 60 000 postgraduate students funded by the NRF over a six-year period and looked at the average age at completion for honours, master's and doctoral students. The prescribed ages for qualifications were obtained as an outcome of this analysis.

12. Will international students at all levels of postgraduate studies be eligible for NRF postgraduate funding?

No, international students will not be eligible for NRF honours postgraduate funding. International students will only be eligible for funding at the master's and doctoral levels and will be funded at PCS only.

Financial Means Test

13. How will the NRF establish financial need?

The NRF will identify students that have previously been assessed as financially needy by National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or the Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP). In addition, students who have not undergone a financial need test will be subjected to a Household Financial Means Test by the NRF in partnership with ISFAP. Only students that complete the consent form and provide the requested information will be subjected to a Household Financial Means Test by the NRF. The consent form must be completed correctly (**all household contributors listed on the online application form should have their ID numbers and signatures reflecting on the consent form**), and the form must be signed and stamped by the commissioner of oaths. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

14. Who is regarded as a financially needy student?

A student with a combined gross family income of R350 000.00 (three hundred and fifty thousand rand) per annum or less will be regarded as financially needy by the NRF. The combined gross family income of the student's parents/spouses and/or legal guardians will be used to undertake the Household Financial Means Test. This will apply to all scholarship applicants' intending to study for full-time studies irrespective of their age or level of postgraduate study.

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15. What does combined gross family income mean?

Combined gross family income is defined as a measure of the combined income of parents/spouses and/or legal guardians who earn income both from the formal and informal sector (e.g., salaries and wages, grants, pension and other sources of income including business and/or rental income). This applies to all students applying to the NRF for postgraduate funding.

16. If I was previously funded by NSFAS or ISFAP, will I still need to undergo a financial means test to be eligible for NRF postgraduate funding?

No, applicants who were previously identified as falling into the category with a combined gross family income of R350 000.00 (three hundred and fifty thousand rand) per annum or less, by either NSFAS or ISFAP, will not need to undergo a financial means test. Such applicants must attach proof of financial means test on the NRF Connect Application template. The attachment must be an official university stamped financial statement or acceptance of an award from NSFAS or ISFAP.

17. If I was previously funded by the University Financial Aid, will I be required to undergo a financial means test?

Yes, you will be required to undergo a financial means test for postgraduate funding in order to establish your financial need status i.e., whether you fall into the category with a combined gross family income of R350 000.00 (three hundred and fifty thousand rand) per annum or less.

18. What if my combined gross family income is just above R350 000, for example R355 000, will the NRF exclude me from obtaining funding?

No, you would be eligible for Partial Cost of Study (PCS) funding on condition that you meet the university requirements and NRF eligibility criteria.

19. Do students who require a financial means test that are older than 18 years of age, who are no longer minors or living with their parents or guardian, still need to complete a consent form?

The NRF offers funding support to students studying/intending to study on a full-time basis and who will not be in contractual or permanent employment whether salaried or unpaid while pursuing postgraduate studies. The financial means test will be based on the combined gross family income which is defined as a measure of the combined income of parents/spouses and/or legal guardians who earn income both from the formal and informal sector (e.g., salaries and wages,

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grants, pension and other sources of income including business and/or rental income). This will apply to all applicants for NRF funding irrespective of the age of the student.

20. When can a student apply for a Financial Means Test to be conducted?

There are four instances when a student can undergo a financial means test:

a. A student can undergo a financial means test at the time of application for funding for a specific postgraduate qualification.
b. In instances where a student upgrades from a masters to a doctoral degree and did not get an opportunity to undergo a financial means test.
c. In instances where a student was awarded an extension support for masters and they want it converted into a doctoral scholarship and did not get an opportunity to undergo a financial means test.
d. If there are compelling reasons e.g. individual contributing to household income becomes unemployed or deceased.

21. How many times in a year is the Financial Means Test conducted?

A financial means test is conducted once annually by 01 September. Continuing NRF-funded students requesting financial means test should liaise with the institutions and complete the relevant documents to be submitted by the institutions to the NRF by 14 August. The outcomes of the financial means test will be made available by 11 December.

22. Can I complete the ISFAP consent form with my details only?

No, the financial means test is based on the combined gross family income, therefore all household contributors and the applicants' ID numbers and signatures have to reflect on the consent form. If only the applicants' details appear, the form will be deemed incomplete, and a financial means test will not be conducted.

Funding Period

23. What is the maximum period of support for full-time study at the various postgraduate levels 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, of which 1 or 2 years may be for master's studies

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Extension Support for master's and doctoral	Six (6) or twelve (12) months

24. Some students may need more than three years to complete a doctoral degree. Will the stipulated three years for completion be sufficient?

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) minimum prescribed period for full-time master's and doctoral studies are one (1) and two (2) years respectively. NRF funded students are eligible for two (2) years of funding for master's studies and three (3) years of funding for doctoral studies. Under exceptional circumstances, students may apply for extension support of six (6) or twelve (12) months for completion of the master's or doctoral degree.

25. What does 'uninterrupted study support' mean?

Uninterrupted study support is funding of postgraduate students from the honours up to the doctoral level. Students must register for a master's degree immediately after completing the honours degree and/or register for a doctoral degree immediately after completing the master's degree. In addition, they will have to make a new scholarship application for each study level and meet the stipulated academic entry requirements.

26. How will the NRF cater for female students who have taken time off from their studies in-between degrees to raise a family?

The 20% no age restriction category makes provision for an interruption period for female students who wish to complete their postgraduate studies at a later stage , which enables female students who wish to take a break during their postgraduate studies to raise a family. Female students that take a break during their postgraduate studies to raise a family will be eligible for uninterrupted postgraduate funding provided that they meet all other eligibility criteria. For example, a student who completes her undergraduate degree at the age of 21 has a period of 11 years in which to complete an honours and master's degree and apply for funding for doctoral studies by the age of 32 years.

27. Is it possible for students who started a doctoral or master's degree without NRF funding to apply for the funding from their second year onwards?

Yes, full-time students that have commenced their master's or doctoral studies without NRF funding may apply for funding for completion of their master's or doctoral degree provided that all other eligibility criteria have been met including the age of entry requirement. Master's students will not be funded beyond their second year of registration and doctoral students will not be funded

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beyond their third year of registration and the initial date for registration of the degree will be considered.

28. Can students apply for funding at any level of study?

Yes, students may enter at any level of their postgraduate studies provided that they meet the NRF eligibility criteria and university requirements. For example, a student that did not meet the 65% requirement in their honours/four-year undergraduate degree will not be funded for master's studies and a student that did not meet the 65% requirement in the master's degree will not be funded for doctoral studies.

29. How many years will students who upgrade from a master's to doctoral registration have to complete their studies?

A student who is upgrading from a master's to doctoral studies will receive funding for a total of four (4) years. A student who upgrades after receiving one (1) year of funding will receive funding for a further three (3) years and a student who upgrades after receiving two (2) years of funding will receive a further two (2) years of funding to complete the doctoral degree.

30. Will the NRF still be considering applications for extension support and at what level of study?

Yes, the NRF will maintain its mechanism for providing extension of funding support at the master's and doctoral level only. Recipients of both Full Cost of Study (FCS) and PCS scholarships may apply for extension support funding, however such extension will only be provided under exceptional circumstances and will not exceed twelve (12) months. Students who are awarded extension support will be awarded according to the value of their scholarship received in the year of extension support application.

Postgraduate Students living with a disability

31. How does the NRF define a person living with a disability?

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*."

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32. What is the minimum academic requirement for students that are living with a disability to be eligible for FCS funding?

A student must obtain:

- A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study for honours funding.
- A minimum average of 65% at the honours level or final year of a four-year degree for master's funding; and
- A minimum of 65% at the master's level for doctoral funding.

33. Will students living with a disability be funded strictly for 1, 2 or 3 years for honours, master's or doctoral studies respectively?

No, students living with a disability may be supported for an additional 12 months should the disability impact on the time for completion of the requirements for fulfilment of the degree.

34. Will students living with a disability be eligible for an upgrade from master's to doctoral studies?

Postgraduate students living with a disability that upgrade from a master's to a doctoral degree may be funded for maximum of five (5) years should the disability impact on the time for completion of the requirements for fulfilment of the degree. The NRF will only upgrade master's bursaries to doctoral level upon receipt of official university upgrade confirmation documents.

35. What is the value of FCS scholarship for students living with disabilities?

The scholarship value for FCS is indicated in the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Application and Funding Framework document.

36. Will students living with a disability be eligible for any other allowances?

Students living with a disability may apply for additional funding for an assistive technology device of up to R20 000 per annum. This is the maximum amount allowed during the tenure of the scholarship.

37. Can the assistive technology device allowance be used for services such as a caregiver or driver?

No, the assistive technology device allowance is to be used for requirements related to research purposes only.

Funding Exclusions

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38. Will students who are intending to register for part-time studies be considered for NRF Student Postgraduate Funding?

No, only students intending to register for full-time studies at any public university in South Africa will be funded. Students who commenced their master's and doctoral studies on a part-time basis and wish to be considered for funding for completion of their studies on a full-time basis, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

39. Which qualifications are not funded by the NRF?

a. Undergraduate qualifications, regardless of National Qualification Framework (NQF) exit level;
b. Postgraduate certificates or diplomas, regardless of NQF exit level; and
c. Professional master's and doctoral degrees, regardless of NQF exit level (*Further clarification of the professional degrees can be obtained from the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) approved by the DHET*).

40. Will the NRF still support grantholder-linked scholarships?

Yes, however the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy is adopting a one call approach, wherein scholarships will no longer be included in research grant awards as was previously the case. All students must apply through the NRF connect system on https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/ to be considered for postgraduate funding.

Areas of Support

41. Will the fields of study to be supported be aligned to the NRF Research Strategy?

Yes, the fields of study will be aligned to the NRF strategy, in that the majority of student bursaries will be allocated in a directed manner so as to respond to national priorities, vulnerable disciplines and fields important for socio-economic development, as may be identified by the NRF from time to time.

42. Does the NRF gender target of 55% not restrict access to female applicants' entering the system?

No, the proposed gender target of 55% female is aimed at encouraging women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) not only to remain in the system, but to progress from honours up to doctoral studies.

43. Why are professional degrees not considered for funding?

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The NRF mandate states that the objective of the foundation is to contribute to national development by supporting, promoting and advancing research and human capacity development, through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development. It is for this reason that the NRF has taken a strategic decision based on its mandate not to fund: postgraduate certificates or diplomas (e.g. PGCE), professional master's (e.g. MBA) and doctoral degrees, regardless of the NQF exit level.

Academic Support Activities for Students

44. Will students be paid for the 80 hours per annum of academic service work that they will be rendering?

No, students will not be paid for academic service work rendered, either by the NRF or the university, as the academic service work will be done in the spirit of making a contribution to society.

Review of applications

45. If I do not have results for my current in-progress degree e.g. master's results when applying for doctoral funding, will my application be considered for funding?

Yes, you may apply with the results of your previous degree e.g. by using honours results or final year result if you have completed a four-year undergraduate degree. However, if you are awarded a scholarship, it will be provisional depending on whether you pass your master's degree with the minimum NRF academic requirement of 65%.

Awarding Criteria

46.How many students received funding for postgraduate studies annually from the NRF?

The number of students funded annually is dependent on the availability of the budget.

47. Will combining the SADC students with students from the rest of the world in the funding allocations targets, not undermine the SADC protocol on education and training which states that "member states shall reserve at least 5% of admissions for students from SADC nations other than their own" and also states that, "member states are required to treat students from SADC countries as home students for purposes of tuition and accommodation"?

No, while this proposal states that postgraduate funding should be allocated to 95% South Africans (including permanent residents) and 5% students from the rest of the world including

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students from SADC countries. The 5% allocation is expected to advance South Africa's global partnerships, which would include commitments to SADC.

Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS) funding

48. Who is eligible for FCS?

FCS will be available to South African citizens and permanent resident students, who (i) are either financially needy; (ii) living with a disability; or (iii) are exceptional academic achievers.

49. What is the value of FCS funding?

The scholarship value for FCS is indicated in the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Application and Funding Framework document.

50. Who is eligible for PCS?

The PCS will be available to (i) South African citizens and permanent resident students who are not eligible to be funded under FCS; (ii) students from SADC countries; and (iii) students from the rest of the world.

51. What are the minimum academic requirements for students to be considered for PCS funding by the NRF?

A student must obtain:

- A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study for honours funding;
- A minimum average of 65% at the honours level or final year of a four-year degree for master's funding; and
- A minimum of 65% (or cum laude) at the master's level for doctoral funding.

52. What is the value of PCS funding?

The scholarship value of PCS is indicated in the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Application and Funding Framework document.

53. How will the NRF scholarship be paid out?

The scholarship will be paid out on a monthly or quarterly basis depending on the institution.

54. Who decides which student receives FCS or PCS funding?

The NRF decides on the type of support awarded to students based on a financial means test outcomes, academic achievement, disability and citizenship.

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55. Will students funded under PCS receive uninterrupted study support?

Yes, however, they must complete their degree within the NRF funding period and obtain the required minimum of 65% in their degree. Refer to question 26 under uninterrupted study support.

56. If the NRF is held as a primary funder on all DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Funding, what does this imply?

The NRF conditions of award supersedes other funder agreements and conditions of award, therefore the NRF will remain the primary funder.

57. Will all students who are awarded NRF FCS funding receive the same scholarship value? That is, will the cost of living in each city and region be taken into consideration?

Yes, all students will receive the same scholarship value as indicated in the Application and Funding Framework. In addition, students may receive supplementary funding as detailed in question 60.

58. Will a student who receives NRF PCS or FCS funding be allowed to hold other scholarships and/or top-up funding?

Yes, students on PCS and FCS funding may receive supplementary funding from another private-sector source or other South African government or the supervisor's running expenses (SARChI, CoEs, etc.) or any other source, provided that the total funding received from the NRF, and the other source(s) does not exceed the institutional maximum limit for that level. Additional funding must not cover the same costs covered by the NRF scholarship.

59. Will students whose master's degree has been upgraded to a doctoral programme be considered under FCS or PCS for the doctoral studies?

Students who upgrade from a master's to doctoral registration and that have demonstrated exceptional achievement to date may be considered for FCS. The NRF will consider motivations from the student and supervisor submitted through the university Designated Authority.

60. Will a student who receives a merit award from their institution be allowed to receive NRF postgraduate funding?

Students on PCS and FCS may receive a merit award from their institution or funding from another private-sector source or other South African government, provided that the total funding received does not exceed the institutional maximum limit for that level.

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Awards

61. How will an applicant know whether their application was successful?

A list of successful applicants is published on the NRF website at Application Outcomes – National Research Foundation (nrf.ac.za). In addition, if a student who has been successfully awarded a scholarship logs into their account on NRF Connect they will be able to see the status of their application on the Home page where the application resides.

62. How will an awardee know if they were awarded FCS or PCS?

The value of the scholarship that has been awarded to an awardee is indicated in the award or outcome letter which student will receive in the event of a successful application.

63. Will unsuccessful applicants receive feedback from the NRF?

Unsuccessful applicants will receive "regret" letters from the NRF. These applicants are those that are eligible to receive an award, but not be awarded due to budget constraints. Should additional budget become available, applicants in this category may then be considered for funding.

With respect to feedback from the review panel, this is up to the institution to manage as the institutions run the postgraduate application review process. Please enquire with your institution should you require reviewers' feedback.

Changes on Project or Funding Support

64. Who should a student contact if they have queries about the NRF scholarship?

Students should contact the Designated Authority (DA) at the institutional research or postgraduate office for any queries relating to DSTI-NRF Postgraduate funding.

65. Will the NRF allow changes of the award from FCS to PCS or *vice versa*?

Yes, **subject to availability of funding**, if a student was awarded PCS but is eligible for FCS, the student can submit proof of academic merit (>75% for the previous degree) as well as a formal request for reconsideration to the NRF via the institutional research office.

66. Does the NRF allow project changes from what was submitted in the original application that was approved for funding?

Yes, changes are allowed, however these changes have to be approved by the NRF. A formal letter explaining the project change which is signed by the student and supervisor should be submitted to the institutional research or postgraduate office. Thereafter the office will forward the letter to the NRF. Project changes should be logged with the NRF within the first year of the grant.

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NB: Students on Extension Support funding cannot be defer the grant nor is student allowed to change research project, field of study or institution.

67. What should be done if the supervisor of the NRF-funded project has changed?

The NRF requires a release letter from the previous supervisor as well as a confirmation of supervision letter from the new supervisor.

68. Are transfers from one institution to another permitted?

Yes, transfers are permitted. The student should contact the institutional research or postgraduate office for assistance.

69. Are deferments of scholarships to the next academic year permitted?

No, however an award can be deferred to the second semester of the year of award. The student will have to write a formal letter to the NRF requesting such a deferment with an explanation of why the deferment is required. Deferments to the next year are not allowed.

70. Can I take a leave of absence due to medical reasons?

Yes, a leave of absence due to medical reasons is permitted. The leave of absence must be approved by the institution. A formal request must be submitted to the NRF for consideration together with letters of support from the supervisor and medical practitioner.

Financial Control

71. What will the recourse be should students receiving either FCS or PCS funding fail to complete the degree within the NRF stipulated time?

By accepting FCS or PCS funding from the NRF, the student agrees to complete the degree in the stipulated period i.e., within a year after NRF funding has ceased. Failure to meet this commitment, especially if it is determined that it was due to negligence, would constitute a breach of contract and students must return all the monies paid 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.

72. What will happen in instances where the university provides a certain percentage fee waiver or where a tuition fee is not charged?

The execution of a fee waiver will be at the discretion of the university and guided by the university processes.

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73. What will happen to the once-off electronic study device funds should the student not utilise it during the first year of the award?

If the electronic study device funding is not claimed in the first year of the award, the NRF will allow a carry forward of funds into the second year of the award. However, should the carry forward not be utilised in the second year, these funds will be forfeited.

74. Can the scholarship be used to offset outstanding debt?

No, the scholarship cannot be used to pay any outstanding debt. The scholarship must be used for the degree for which it was awarded only.

Appeals

75. Can a student whose application was unsuccessful appeal the funding decision?

The NRF has an appeal process each year after awards have been made. However, the appeal process is limited to applications that were not recommended for funding during the review process (conducted by the institution). Applicants whose applications were submitted to the NRF for review cannot appeal against a funding decision made by the NRF. Appeals cannot be done against a type of approved funding amount i.e., FCS or PCS.

Reporting

76. Will a student be expected to report their progress to the NRF?

Yes, completion of progress reports is compulsory for continuation of funding. Annual progress reports have to be completed by mid-February. Scholarships will be cancelled in the event of non-submission of progress reports or non-response from the supervisor.

77. What will happen to the scholarship of a student who fails to complete a progress report?

The scholarship will be cancelled and the student will have to return the funding that has already been paid out to the NRF.

Completion of degree

78. What happens if a student does not complete the degree for which funding was awarded within the given timeframe?

The Defaulting Student Process will be followed whereby the student will be contacted by the NRF to repay the scholarship that was awarded to them.

79. What should be done once the degree, for which funding was awarded, has been completed?

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The Designate Authority from the institutions research / postgraduate office will complete the graduation or completion data on the NRF system.

Proof of completion should be attached to the Progress Reports or students' profiles on NRF Connect, in one of the following formats:

- academic transcripts that indicate that the degrees are completed; or
- graduation certificates for students at the end of their grant.

80. Where can I get the NRF logo for acknowledgements on my thesis or publications?

The NRF logo as well as the NRF Corporate Identity Guidelines can be accessed via NRF-CID-Nov-2023.pdf

Grantholder-linked associated students

81. Where does a student indicate on their application that they are linked to an NRF grantholder's research grant?

The applicant must select ***Scholarship linked to NRF-funded research*** in the Application Category section. Once this has been selected, a space will appear for the applicant to indicate either their supervisor's grant number (UID) or application reference number.

82. Will grantholder-linked associated applicants automatically be awarded scholarships?

No, eligibility criteria as outlined in the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Application and Funding Framework document are still applicable. Applications submitted to the NRF for review will be screened to check eligibility and application requirements. Only eligible applications will go through to the final stage of funding decisions.

Travel grants

83. Does the NRF still provide travel grants?

Yes, the NRF provides research mobility opportunities of between 3 – 18 months abroad for doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows who are NRF funded and Early Career Researchers, through the Global Knowledge Partnerships (GKP) programme. Scholars need to apply for the research mobility programmes or be nominated to be considered for funding. In addition, doctoral students can apply for the Knowledge Interchange and Collaboration (KIC) travel grants for local and international conferences, workshops, and seminars. For more information and how to apply:

- for research mobility opportunities, please refer the GKP Application Framework document.
- for the KIC travel grants, please visit the NRF Connect at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/

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