



**National
Research
Foundation**

**DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding
Framework for Funding in 2022 Academic Year**

Stellenbosch University Internal Closing dates:

First-time Masters Scholarships: 17 June 2021

First-time Doctoral Scholarships (Incl Nuffic (Split-site) Doctoral Scholarships): 01 July 2021

SARAO First-time Masters and Doctoral (South African Radio Astronomy Observatory): 26 July 2021

SARAO Honours Scholarships: 03 August 2021

Extension Support for Masters and Doctoral Studies: 18 August 2021

Honours General Scholarships: 1 September 2021 (if Financial means test is required);
1 November 2021 for the rest

NRF Partners for Postgraduate Student Funding



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**higher education
& training**

Department:
Higher Education and Training
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DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



ISFAP

Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme

sasol



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1. Introduction

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

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

In 2021, the NRF introduced 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 will be 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 will be increased to cover the full cost of study for students who meet required criteria. In order to develop a future cohort of researchers and scholars, it is vital that postgraduate students complete their studies without delay and that they continue through to completion of their doctoral studies. To advance these priorities, the NRF will offer guaranteed funding for full-time studies from honours through to the doctoral degree level, subject to satisfactory performance at each consecutive postgraduate level.

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation guidelines. The context within which the NRF functions is informed by various strategic frameworks, legislation, policies and plans of Government. This framework document must be read together with the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) System (2018); The Strategy for Human Capacity Development for Research, Innovation and Scholarships (2016); National development Plan (2030); Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Scheme for Students at Public Universities (2021) and The Ministerial Guidelines for Improving Equity and the Distribution of DST/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships (2013).

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

2. Global Knowledge Partnerships (GKP)

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

All South African students receiving NRF funding for doctoral studies in South Africa are encouraged to incorporate a period of international training that forms an integral part of their doctoral training programme. International training opportunities must be identified and financed in consultation with the support of the doctoral supervisor(s) and the university. The NRF will

facilitate international training opportunities but will not fund these placements. The existing international training opportunities for NRF funded doctoral students are outlined below.

Students receiving **NRF-DAAD in-country master's and doctoral funding** may apply for a short-term research fellowship for research training spanning three to six months in Germany. Further information of these short-term research fellowships and further information can be obtained from: daad@wits.ac.za. After the consultation, funding applications can be submitted directly to the DAAD application portal. Students receiving NRF-DAAD in-country funding may also apply to participate in one of six interdisciplinary summer schools in Germany.

The **Fulbright Foreign Student Program** in partnership with the NRF supports **Visiting Student Researchers** to undertake non-degree doctoral research training at a university in the United States of America. South African citizens and permanent residents with a minimum of five (5) years of permanent residency status in South Africa may apply annually for support under the Fulbright Visiting Student Researcher programme (<http://e.america.gov/t/i-BAF861AC3B2388642540EF23F30FEDED>). Applications are open for the 2022-2023 academic year and will **close on 14 May 2021**.

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

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

3. Areas of Support

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

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

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

4. Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Eligibility for first-time applicants for honours, master's and doctoral funding

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;
- **For first-time doctoral funding** - A minimum of 65% at the master's level.

A student with a classification of "Pass" or "Pass with distinction" will not be allowed to apply for the current call. Only students with a numerical pass mark may apply for NRF funding. Only international students applying for master's and doctoral scholarships will be allowed to apply with a "Pass" without a numerical mark, however, these students will be allocated a default score of 1 during the application review process.

The eligibility criteria for funding at Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS) listed in Table 1 apply to all first-time applicants for honours, master's and doctoral funding.

Table 1. Eligibility criteria for first time applicants for the NRF postgraduate funding for Full Cost of Study and Partial Cost of Study for the 2022 academic year

Study Level	Full Cost of Study		Partial Cost of Study
	Exceptional Achievers	Financially Needy and Students with Disability	Other
Honours	Average of $\geq 75\%$ mark 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
	Applicants for honours funding must be 28 years of age or younger in the year of application i.e. applicants must not be over 28 years by 31 December 2021. Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible for honours bursaries.		
Master's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 75% for all subjects at the honours level; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 75% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma level; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 75% for final year subjects of a four-year degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 65% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 65% for final year subjects of a four-year degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 65% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum average of 65% for final year subjects of a four-year degree
	Applicants for master's funding must be 30 years of age or younger in the year of application i.e. applicants must not be over 30 years by 31 December 2021.		
Doctoral	Minimum average of 75% for Master's degree	Minimum average of 65% for Master's degree	Minimum average of 65% for Master's degree
	Applicants for doctoral funding 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 2021.		

FCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens and permanent residents only, who are either financially needy, living with a disability or exceptional academic achievers. However, it does not guarantee funding if you fall under these three categories. Refer to section 13 for further information on considerations for funding. 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.

4.2 Eligibility for first-time applicants for master's and doctoral funding who commenced their studies on a part-time basis

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, may apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, only students who will be registered on a full-time basis for their second or third year of master's studies in 2022 may apply. Students who will be registered on a full-time basis for their second, third, or fourth year of doctoral studies in 2022 may apply, and the initial date for registration of the degree will be taken into consideration to determine the support period if applicant is successful.

4.2 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-SARAO applicants

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

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

4.3 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-TWAS doctoral applicants

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

- Applicants must register at a South African public university in 2022, on a **full-time basis** and may be based at any South African public research institution including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Science Councils and National Research Facilities. Details of NRF Recognised HEIs and other Public Research Institutions are available [here](#).
- The NRF-TWAS doctoral funding is open **only to citizens and permanent residents from developing countries on the African continent and elsewhere**. Please refer to

the list of [eligible developing countries](#) and the list of [66 priority countries](#) for TWAS funding.

- Applicants must not be living, studying or working in South Africa in 2021.
- Applicants who were previously employed or studying towards a degree, or undertaking research in South Africa, and have returned to their country of origin, but have been in their country of origin for less than two (2) years, are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants must be thirty-two **(32) years of age or younger by 31 December** of the year of application for the doctoral scholarship.
- Visa and immigration laws of the applicant's home country and South Africa must be met by the applicant. The applicant must arrange his/her own Visa and/or study permit under the programme for study in South Africa. **Neither NRF nor TWAS will be responsible for assisting with visa arrangements. However, the NRF will cover cheapest return economy flight and the visa and/or study permit costs for NRF-TWAS doctoral applicants.**
- Upon completion of their studies, all successful applicants' must return to their country of origin. **Students who fail to return to their home country will be liable to pay back the amount to the NRF equal to the number of years of study support they have received.**
- Only applicants who wish to pursue research under Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines will be supported under the NRF-TWAS doctoral funding.

4.4 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-DAAD applicants

- Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible for master's and doctoral bursaries.
- Only students that are eligible for FCS funding will be awarded NRF-DAAD funding.
- Applicants should have a general interest in an education and cultural exchange with Germany.

4.5 Eligibility for Extension Support applicants for full-time master's and doctoral studies

The eligibility criteria for applicants for Extension Support for full-time master's and doctoral studies in 2022 are as follows:

- Applicants must be NRF scholarship-holders in 2021. Extensions will only be granted under exceptional circumstances and will be for either six (6) or twelve (12) months as

the NRF expects all postgraduate students to complete their qualifications within the NRF funding period.

- Applicants applying for extension support at the master's level must have registered for their master's degree in 2020 or July 2019.
- Applicants applying for extension support at the doctoral level must have registered for their doctoral degree in 2019 or July 2018.
- Only students pursuing full-time master's or doctoral studies in South Africa are eligible to apply.
- Applicants for extension support will be eligible for postgraduate funding at the same value as their 2021 funding.
- Applicants must have the support from their supervisor in order for the Extension application to be considered.

4.6 Eligibility for NRF Uninterrupted Study Support

Uninterrupted study support is funding of postgraduate students from the honours up to the doctoral level, however, they will have to make a new scholarship application for each study level. NRF-funded students will be eligible for uninterrupted study support provided that they meet the following requirements:

- The NRF-funded degree is completed within the NRF funding periods which are one (1) year for a full-time honours degree and two (2) years for a full-time master's degree;
- Register for a master's degree immediately after completing the honours or undergraduate degree that qualifies for admittance into a master's programme;
- Register for a doctoral degree immediately after completing the master's degree; and
- Meet all the university and NRF requirements for postgraduate funding.

5. Students not eligible for NRF postgraduate funding

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

- Students who hold NRF funding for first-year master's studies in 2021, or first- or second-year doctoral studies in 2021, are not eligible to apply for funding as new students. These continuing students must submit all required Progress Reports (PR) on the NRF Online Submission System by the stipulated cut-off date to receive funding for the 2022 academic year, as per the Conditions of Grant and NRF approved funding level.
- Students who registered for their masters' studies before July 2020.

- Students who registered for their doctoral studies before July 2019.
- Individuals that already hold a degree for the same level at which they intend studying, are not eligible to apply, e.g. individuals that hold a master's qualification may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding for master's studies.
- Students who de-registered from a degree and are applying for funding for the same level may apply, however the first date of registration for the original degree will be taken into account when determining the eligible period for NRF funding.
- Students who will be in their pre-proposal year in 2022 should not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding for the pre-proposal year. In case where a master's or doctoral programme includes a pre-proposal registration year prior to the first year of the programme, the NRF will not fund the pre-proposal year. The pre-proposal year will not be counted as a first year of registration for the degree.
- Students who intend to register for, or who are studying for a 100% master's by coursework, professional master's or professional doctoral degree, may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding. Further clarification of the professional degrees may be obtained from the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).
- Individuals who will be in contractual or permanent employment, whether salaried or unpaid, that exceeds 12 hours of work per week, while pursuing honours, master's or doctoral studies may not hold DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for full-time studies. The above-mentioned 12 hours of work per week only applies to the institutional students' services such as teaching, tutorials and assistance or demonstration duties during the year of study.
- Individuals that are on sabbatical leave from their current employment may not apply for DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding.
- Students who intend to study towards a Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate in Education and any postgraduate qualification that does not entail research as a core component.
- Students pursuing an undergraduate degree irrespective of the degree that they are enrolled for.

6. Financial Means Test

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

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

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

- a. Completed NRF-ISFAP consent form certified by a commissioner of oath uploaded to the Financial Need section of the application;
- b. Consent form must be co-signed by the household contributor(s) whom the financial means test will be conducted against and their ID numbers must be included on the online application form ; and
- c. Consent to the NRF-ISFAP, and/or such other person or entity that the NRF-ISFAP may designate, the absolute right and permission to conduct creditworthy checks, affordability assessments and to verify his/her combined household income in order to ascertain whether they qualify for NRF-ISFAP funding.

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

Applicants who were previously funded by Funza Lushaka, Department of Military Veterans, or Department of Social Development (DSD) bursaries for their undergraduate studies must undergo a financial means test upon application for DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding. Typically, students funded by Funza Lushaka, Department of Military Veterans or DSD are nominated by the funder and financial need is not a criterion in the award of the undergraduate

bursaries (although the bursaries are administered *via* NSFAS), hence they will be subjected to a financial means test at the postgraduate level.

7. Applicable Allowances

Successful applicants will be funded either at FCS or PCS. The **FCS** will cover **tuition fee, accommodation** (i.e., university owned accommodation or private rental accommodation), **living and transport allowance, food allowance** and a once-off allowance for **electronic study device** (Table 2). In the event that a student is not residing in university owned accommodation or private rental accommodation) they will be eligible for **tuition fee, living and transport allowance, food allowance** and a once-off allowance for **electronic study device**.

The **PCS** will cover **tuition fee and accommodation costs only** for students that are residing in university owned accommodation or private rental accommodation (Table 2). In the event that a student is not residing in university owned accommodation or private rental accommodation, they will be eligible for **tuition fee and living and transport allowance only**.

Table 2: Annual NRF allowances applicable for FCS and PCS for honours, master's and doctoral studies.

Category	Funding per level of Postgraduate Study ¹					
	Honours		Master's		Doctoral	
	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS
Living and Transport allowance (Rand)	12 000 pa	n/a	30 000 pa	n/a	48 000 pa	n/a
Food allowances (Rand)	27 000 pa	n/a	27 000 pa	n/a	27 000pa	n/a
Maximum Accommodation allowance (Rand) ²	53 350	53 350	64 020	64 020	64 020	64 020
Maximum Tuition Fees (Rand) ³	52 350	52 350	41 880	41 880	31 410	31 410
Maximum (Rand)	144 700 pa	105 700 pa	162 900 pa	105 900 pa	170 430 pa	95 430 pa
Electronic study Device allowance (Rand) ⁴	10 000	n/a	10 000	n/a	10 000	n/a
Maximum Assistive technology device (Rand) ⁵	20 000	n/a	20 000	n/a	20 000	n/a

1. The allowances per category will be reviewed on an annual basis subject to the agreed CPI-linked sector-wide increases and alignment with the *Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Scheme for Students at Public Universities*.
2. Accommodation fee will be capped and paid as per invoice. Limited to maximum cost of the equivalent university owned accommodation at a particular institution. **Students accommodated in private rental accommodation must also provide proof of a valid lease agreement.**
3. Tuition fee will be capped and paid as per invoice. Tuition fee is the agreed institutional fee for the actual programme of study. Registration fee to be included in the tuition fee allowance. Qualifying NRF funded students in possession of a provisional award letter are not required to pay an upfront registration fee.
4. The electronic study device allowance will be provided as a once-off allowance for the duration of the postgraduate studies.
5. The Assistive technology device allowance will be only for students with disability.

Students living with a disability may apply for **additional funding** for an **assistive technology device** of up to **R20 000**. This is the **maximum amount allowed** during the tenure of the scholarship. **An assistive device** is defined as any device, product, equipment or tool that is designed or adapted to enable persons with disabilities to participate in activities, tasks or actions including: (i) **mobility aids** such as wheelchairs, prostheses and crutches as well as service animals (ii) **communication aids** such as hearing aids, Frequency Modulation (FM) systems; (iii) **sensory aids** such as white canes; noise reducing headphones and coloured lenses (iv) **technology aids** such as computers for alternate and augmentative communication, screen readers, magnifiers, texts in audio format (Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the PSET, 2018).

7.1 The maximum period of support for each postgraduate level of study

The DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding is aimed at supporting students intending to register at a South African public university for full-time honours, master's or doctoral studies. Extension support for master's and doctoral students will be approved only under exceptional circumstances. The maximum period of support for each postgraduate level of study is indicated in **Table 3**.

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

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

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

8. Application Process

Students **must first identify the university where they will be registered for their postgraduate degree before submitting an application to the NRF**. Applications for funding in 2022 must be submitted to the university where students intend to register, through the NRF Online Submission System by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>. **Universities will set their own internal cut-off dates for applications and applicants must abide by those dates**. Further instructions on the application process will be made available in the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2022.

8.1 Grantholder-linked (GHL) associated applicants

Postgraduate students who have been recruited by an NRF-funded supervisor to be part of a research project/group, under any of the NRF Funding Instruments listed below, should apply *via* the **General Scholarships Category** and **should provide the NRF Grant UID Number (unique identification number), OR, provide the NRF Application Reference Number if the research project application has been submitted to the NRF for review**. Students should list the supervisor under the reference section of their application for support under the application and indicate the role as master's or doctoral supervisor:

- Research Chairs (SARChI),
- Centres of Excellence (CoE),
- Thuthuka,
- Global Knowledge Research Programmes such as
 - Earth Systems Science Research Programme (ESSRP);
 - Global Change Social Sciences Research Programme (GCSSRP); and
 - Risk and Vulnerability Science Centres (RVSCs);
- African Earth Observation Network (AEON);
- Foundational Biodiversity Information Programme (FBIP);
- South African Earth Observation Network (SAEON); and
- SARAO-Funded Research Groups

8.2 Non NRF Grantholder-linked applicants

Postgraduate students who have **not** been recruited by an NRF-funded supervisor will **not** need to provide a UID or application reference number on the online application template.

8.3 Continuing NRF funded masters and doctoral students

All **current NRF funded** students who are eligible for a second or third year of funding must submit a Progress Report and not a new application. Refer to section 14. A new application should only be submitted for consideration to be funded for the next level of postgraduate study.

9. Documents to be attached to applications

Applicants must refer to the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2022, for a list of required attachments as these may differ for each scholarship category.

10. Review of applications

10.1 Review of applications by university review committees

Honours, master's and doctoral funding applications will be reviewed at the institution at which the student intends studying for the postgraduate degree. Reviews will be undertaken using standardised scorecards provided by the NRF as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. As a result of the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoA) between DAAD and the NRF, DAAD alumni will participate in the institutional review process provided that there are applicants that have selected NRF-DAAD funding in their application.

Only applications that are recommended by the university for NRF funding, based on the review outcome, may be submitted to the NRF, by the university Designated Authority (DA). Review scores and recommendations must be uploaded onto the NRF Online Submission System by the university DA when approving an application on the system. Applications which are not recommended for funding after the institutional review process should be rejected on the NRF Online Submission System and a formal review feedback should be sent to applicants by the university. Appeals that relate to the review of applications by the universities must be responded to by the respective institutional DA. Refer to section 11 on the role of the NRF and the universities regarding the feedback that must be provided to applicants.

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

10.2 Review of applications for strategic initiatives

Applications that fall under specific strategic initiatives may be reviewed by separate review panels using standardised scorecards provided by the NRF as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. The strategic initiatives include, amongst others, the NRF-SARAO postgraduate funding, the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence (CoE's) and the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI). Only applications that are recommended for NRF funding based on the review, may be submitted to the NRF by the DA. Review scores and recommendations will be uploaded onto the NRF Online Submission System by the DA when approving an application on the system. Applications which are not recommended for funding after the institutional review process should be rejected on the NRF Online Submission System and a formal review feedback should be sent to applicants by the university. Appeals that relate to the review of applications by the universities must be responded to by the respective institutional DA. Refer to section 11 on the role of the NRF and the universities regarding the feedback that must be provided to applicants.

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

10.3 Transparency and accountability

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

- The names of committee or panel members of subject experts that participated in the review of applications for DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding;
- Minutes of the review meeting and sign-off by the Chairperson of the review committee;
- Recommendations made by the panel on whether applications are recommended or not recommended for funding, with clearly stated reasons; and
- Correctly allocated scores against each criterion as per weighting provided in the relevant scorecard

10.4 Standardised review scorecards for reviewing applications

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

Table 4. Review Scorecard for First-Time Applications for Honours Level Funding

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

Table 5. Review Scorecard for New Applications for Master's Level Funding

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

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

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

Table 7. Review Scorecard for Master's and Doctoral Level Extension Support

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Progress to date (25%)	Report on research work completed in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree.
2. Reasons why the study could not be completed in the NRF maximum funding period (25%)	Explanation of why the study could not be completed within the NRF funding period.
3. Work plan to complete the degree within the indicated timeframes (50%)	1. Work plan for six (6) or twelve (12) months, indicating activities for completion of master's or doctoral degree, indicating the start and completion date of each activity; 2. Proposed date for submission of the dissertation for examination; 3. Timelines for corrections to dissertation from reviewers; 4. Details of manuscripts to be drafted and submission timelines; and 5. Proposed graduation date.

11. Feedback to Applicants

Applicants must refer to the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2022, regarding the role of the NRF and the universities on feedback for applications submitted.

12. Appeals

Appeals relating to the review process will be undertaken by the university that reviewed the application. Appeals are only based on an unsuccessful outcome during the review process by the university i.e. unfair comment from the review panel or scientific merit. It is the responsibility of the applicant to request formal review feedback from the institution. Appeals may not be lodged against the funding decision taken such as PCS funding or not being awarded funding due to budget constraints.

13. Equity and Redress

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

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

All DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding will be allocated as follows:

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

- **55%** to women.

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

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

When funding decisions are made by the NRF, consideration will be given to ensuring the need to strengthen research capacity in scarce skills, priority skills and knowledge fields as well as to accelerate the demographic transformation. Allocation of funding will be determined by the following criteria: Recommendation by the institutional merit - review panel; NRF Annual Performance Plan (APP) targets; Institutional rate of scholarship awards uptake; Postgraduate enrolments at each university; Institutional spread; Knowledge domains as specified by the funder; Financially need as determined by ISFAP facilitated household means test; Previously NRF, NSFAS and/or ISFAP funded students and Availability of budget.

14. Progress Reporting

All students who were first funded before 2021 (refer to section 14.2) and new students funded in 2021 (refer to section 14.1) must submit Progress Reports endorsed by the Supervisor to ensure continuation of funding. All **continuing students** that are eligible for continuation of scholarship funding for the next year of study must **submit a Progress Report (PR)** and not a new application. Final year students must submit final year reports.

14.1 Bi-annual progress reports for honours, master's and doctoral students commencing with NRF FCS or PCS postgraduate funding in 2021

All students receiving DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding at either FCS or PCS from the 2021 academic year, are required to submit Bi-annual Progress Reports on the NRF Online Submission System on the dates indicated in the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG).

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

- a. The honours students are expected to submit the first report by end August 2021 and final report by mid- February 2022.

- b. Master's and doctoral students must submit the first report by end August 2021 and second report by mid-February 2022.
- c. The honours, master's and doctoral students, by end of their funding period, they must have submitted 2, 4 and 6 reports respectively.

14.2 Progress Reports for master's and doctoral students funded before 2021 academic year

The following continuing students that received NRF funding before 2021 must submit all required Progress Reports based on their signed CoG on the NRF Online Submission System in order to receive continuation funding in 2022. These continuing students, as indicated below, are expected to submit the progress reports once a year.

- a. Master's and doctoral students who are eligible for an extension support for studies in 2022;
- b. Doctoral students who are eligible for a third year of support for doctoral studies in 2022;
- c. Doctoral students who have upgraded from a master's to a doctoral degree and who are eligible for a third or fourth year of funding for doctoral studies in 2022.

Failure to submit a progress report on time will result in the cancellation of a grant for the subsequent year(s) and the grantholder will not be eligible for further funding at the postgraduate level at which they were in breach of the CoG. Students will also not be allowed to apply for funding for the next level of study if they have failed to comply with the progress reporting requirements as per the CoG.

Note: Reporting requirements for NRF-SARAO-funded postgraduate students are provided in the Terms and Conditions / Conditions of Grant, provided by NRF-SARAO.

15. Financial Control

The DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding awards will be managed in terms of standard NRF financial policies and procedures. The payment of the grant by the NRF to successful applicants' will be administered by the NRF Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate to the relevant institutions. The institutions will in turn administer the funds on behalf of the successful applicant to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF.

16. Monitoring and Evaluation by the NRF

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

16.1 NRF-DAAD Funded students

The DAAD and NRF would like to strengthen and maintain contacts with former in-country scholarship-holders, therefore the NRF-DAAD funded final year students will receive a questionnaire that they must complete truthfully and forward to the NRF. The scholarship holder gives consent for the questionnaire to be forwarded to the DAAD for their records. The universities should ensure that this information is transmitted to the NRF as soon as the scholarship ends. The scholarship-holder is expected to uphold contact with the DAAD and join its extensive Alumni family. Please contact the DAAD Information Centre, Johannesburg for further information (daad@wits.ac.za).

17. Selected Conditions of Grant (CoG)

Successful applicants that receive a provisional award for postgraduate funding from the NRF are required to complete and sign the NRF CoG, which will be forwarded at the time of the award. The signed CoG must be submitted together with the required documents. The Student-Supervisor Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) clarifying expectations and preferences in managing the research project, must be signed by both the student and supervisor and submitted with the midyear reports due by the end of August. Master's students registered for coursework in the first year of study, should submit the agreed and signed MoU with their end of year reports due by mid-February of the following year. The CoG includes amongst others the following conditions for the grant award:

- a. Postgraduate funding awarded for the 2022 academic year, that is not taken up by 30 April 2022 will be automatically cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.
- b. All DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding shall be held as the primary funding towards the research study.
- c. Students on FCS may not receive another FCS scholarship from any other government or private sector funder.

- d. If a student receives financial support from another source, DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding may be awarded, however, the allocations must be reduced accordingly. The NRF may not pay for any amounts already covered by another funder. Universities and students must report this information to the NRF in writing, so that funding adjustments may be made.
- e. Students on FCS funding may not receive another FCS scholarship from any other government or private sector funder. However, additional funding can be sourced for shortfall on tuition fees and accommodation.
- f. Students on PCS funding may receive supplementary funding from another source, provided that the total funding received from the NRF and other sources does not exceed that of the NRF FCS funding and any shortfall on tuition fees and accommodation.
- g. Where a university provides a fee waiver for master's or doctoral studies, the funds allocated for the fees will not accrue to the student, but will be made available as a research grant to cover running expenses of the postgraduate research project.
- h. Grantholders will be allowed to undertake teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstration duties to a maximum of 12 hours per week, during the year of study, and the student may be remunerated for his/her services rendered at the normal university tariff for services.
- i. Students are expected to undertake at least 80 hours of Academic Service Work per annum in the form of structured, university determined academic support activities. University determined academic support activities may include tutoring/mentoring of other students; volunteering for orientation of new students and on career days; or science engagement activities. Academic support activities must be included in the student-supervisor MoU and reported on in the student Bi-annual Reports. Please refer further to the *Statement of Expectations for DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding* available under call documents on the NRF website.

- j. Individuals that will be in contractual or permanent employment¹, whether salaried or unpaid, that exceeds 12 hours per week, while pursuing honours, master's or doctoral studies may not hold DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for full-time studies.
- k. The grantholder must obtain the degree, for which the postgraduate funding was awarded, by the contractual date, which is within one (1) year after NRF funding has ceased, and must notify the NRF *via* the university DA of the completion of the degree.
- l. Should the grantholder not complete the degree for which the postgraduate funding was awarded, the total funds received from the NRF, must be returned to the NRF together with interest at the prevailing prime rate charged by the NRF bankers, unless a de-registration is approved by the NRF due to exceptional and extenuating circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that:

- They have read and understood the requirements as laid out in the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Framework as well as the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2022;
- All attachments are translated into English as a medium of communication;
- A suitable supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) has been identified;
- For first-time master's applicants, the identified master's supervisor and referee submit the required report *via* the NRF Online system;
- For first-time doctoral applicants, master's supervisor, identified doctoral supervisor and referee submit the required report *via* the NRF Online system;
- The application is completed in full and the information furnished is correct;
- They adhere to their institution's internal closing date; and
- The university has received the application submitted on the Online Application system.

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

Relevant documents on National Priority Research Areas:

1. <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/143-the-ten-year-plan-for-science-and-technology>
2. <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/174-national-research-a-development-strategy-2002>
3. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Science_Technology_White_Paper.pdf
4. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Bioeconomy%20Strategy_a.pdf
5. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/PALEO_STRATEGY_DST_Final_.pdf
6. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/DST_Nanotech_18012006_0.pdf
7. http://www.gov.za/document?search_query=strategy&field_gcisdoc_doctype=All&field_gcisdoc_subjects=518&start_date=&end_date=&=Search
8. <http://www.gov.za/about-sa/science-technology>

18. NRF Contact Persons

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

For NRF-DAAD and General First-time master's and doctoral related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: kgaugelo.molepo@nrf.ac.za

For master's and doctoral Extension Support related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: busisiwe.sibiyi@nrf.ac.za.

For General honours related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: lehlogonolo.phaahla@nrf.ac.za

For SASAC related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: nelson@nrf.ac.za

For First-time SARChI honours, master's and doctoral related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: andisiwe.jukuda@nrf.ac.za

For First-time CoEs honours, master's and doctoral related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: malekgotla.finger@nrf.ac.za

For NRF-SARAO postgraduate scholarships related enquiries, please contact:

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

Email Address: amashemola@ska.ac.za