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IMPORTANT COMMUNIQUE

To: All NRF Stakeholders and Designated Authorities

From: Dr Mbulelo Ncango

Date: 25 April 2025

Subject: Update on Age Criteria for DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy (PFP) Effective from 25 April 2025

Dear Valued Stakeholders

This communicate serves to inform you of important updates to the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy regarding age criteria. These changes stem from discussions held between the National Research Foundation (NRF), the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), and the wider stakeholder community.

Current age eligibility criteria:

- Applicants for honours funding must be 28 years or younger in the year of application;
- Applicants for master's funding must be 30 years or younger in the year of application; and
- Applicants for doctoral funding must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application.

Revised Age eligibility criteria (Effective 25 April 2025):

Starting with the application cycle for the 2025 academic year, the NRF will implement a new structure for postgraduate funding allocation based on applicant age across all study levels (Honours, Masters, and PhD). This involves the introduction of two distinct funding categories:

1. **"No age restriction" Category:**

- This category will receive **20%** of the total postgraduate funding allocation.
- It is designated for applicants who fall outside the standard age limits specified below.

2. **"Age restriction" Category:**

- This category will receive **80%** of the total postgraduate funding allocation.
- To be considered within this category, applicants must meet the following age requirements in the year of application:
 - **Honours:** Must be 28 years of age or younger by 31 December 2025.
 - **Masters:** Must be 30 years of age or younger by 31 December 2025.
 - **Doctoral:** Must be 32 years of age or younger by 31 December 2025.

Important Clarification on Application Process:

- The business rule enforcing an age limit at the point of application submission will be removed. This means all otherwise eligible candidates can apply for DSTI-NRF postgraduate funding irrespective of their age.
- The distinction between the "No age restriction" and "Age restriction" categories will be applied only during the funding decision/approval phase.

Scope of Application:

These policy changes are applicable to all DSTI-NRF postgraduate funding opportunities, including Freestanding scholarships, Grantholder-linked bursaries, Ad-hoc applications and funding allocated through NRF National Facilities.

Formal Documentation and Next Steps:

- These updated age criteria will be formally incorporated into the **Framework document for the Postgraduate Call**, which is scheduled for publication in April 2025.

Action Requested:

We kindly request that you circulate this communique widely within the research and postgraduate administration offices to ensure awareness of these upcoming changes.

We trust this revised policy will enhance accessibility to NRF postgraduate funding opportunities. Any enquires should be referred to Ms Zodwa Mahlangu (Acting Manager: Next Generation): Tel 012 481 4114 and email address: JZ.Mahlangu@risa.nrf.ac.za

Yours sincerely



Dr Mbulelo Ncango

Senior Manager: Next Generation and Emerging Researchers (NGER)