



**Funding Instrument: Thuthuka**

**Functional Domain: Grants Management & Systems  
Administration**

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## List of Acronyms

APR	Annual Progress Report
DA	Designated Authority
CoG	Conditions of Grant
DST	Department of Science and Technology
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HICD	Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development
NRF	National Research Foundation
RE	Reviews and Evaluation
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
RISP	Research Infrastructure Support Programme
SARChI	South African Research Chairs Initiative
SD	Staff Development

## 1 Introduction

This Funding Guide is intended to inform potential and existing Thuthuka grantholders of the operational procedures for participation in this Funding Instrument. It should be read in conjunction with the Funding Framework document, which can be accessed at [http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding\\_overview.php](http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php).

The Funding Guide provides a brief overview of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument, including issues of eligibility, funding tracks, the application process, funding guidelines and review procedures. It does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

## 2 Thuthuka Funding Instrument

### 2.1 Overview

The Thuthuka Funding Instrument, initiated in 2001, is central to the NRF's human capital development strategy in so far as it relates to advancing the equity and redress agenda within the research sphere. It is located within the Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development directorate at the NRF (<http://hcd.nrf.ac.za/>). Operating within the ever-evolving higher education landscape, this Funding Instrument aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of designated researchers (black [African, Indian and Coloured], female or disabled) with the ultimate aim of redressing historical imbalances. This is done in partnership with public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF.

### 2.2 Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Thuthuka are to -

- promote the attainment of a Doctoral qualification by early-career academics employed at South African universities, Science Councils and other research institutions recognised by the NRF;
- promote the research development of early-career academics employed at South African universities, science councils and other research institutions recognised by the NRF;
- promote the attainment of an NRF rating by early-career academics, in particular black and female researchers and persons with disabilities;
- promote the attainment of an NRF rating by academics that have not been able to realise their potential or sustain their research ability by virtue of the lack of an enabling research environment;
- promote the attainment of an NRF rating by academics that have not been able to realise their potential or sustain their research outputs due to family responsibilities;

- foster a culture of research excellence and aid in the development and expansion of the national knowledge-based economy by boosting research outputs and human capital development; and
- effect a transformation in the demographic composition of the established researcher community at publicly funded HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions recognised by the NRF, with respect to gender, race and persons with disabilities.

### 3 Eligibility

The Thuthuka grants are limited to **academics and researchers**, with academic and/or joint academic and administrative professional appointments, at NRF recognised public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions. Where applicable, applicants must provide proof that the institution, at which the individual is employed, recognises such a joint appointment. Applicants must be employed in these institutions on a full-time permanent or full-time contractual basis. In the case of a contract, the appointment must extend for the duration of the approved 3-year funding cycle.

Applicants that are under the age of 45 years at the time of first application may apply. Applicants in the PhD and Post PhD Tracks over the age of 45 **should** submit a motivation as to why they were not able to achieve their doctoral qualification or research capabilities by the stipulated age.

First-time applicants to Thuthuka should NOT be rated scientists, but may become rated during the tenure of the Thuthuka grant. Once rated, a grantholder must complete the current cycle and exit the Funding Instrument.

Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities can apply. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.

Failure to submit a fully signed and completed Institutional form will render the application ineligible for Review.

In addition to the above criteria the following are also applicable. The Thuthuka Funding Instrument consists of three distinct tracks. Applicants may apply for funding in one of the following three tracks:

#### 3.1 PhD Track

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the PhD Track:

- Only South African citizens.
- Should have obtained a minimum of a Master's degree.
- Registered for a Doctoral degree.
- Institutional commitment from the employing institution pledging to allow the applicant time off for research and relief of teaching duties to conduct

fieldwork/research (institutional support form to be submitted via the electronic application process).

- Electronic endorsement by a nominated supervisor supporting the proposed Doctoral work to be undertaken (supervisor's report to be submitted via the electronic application process).

**Note:**

- The electronic form, completed by the supervisor, must be submitted with the application. Once the applicant inserts the e-mail address of the supervisor in the doctoral registration section, an e-mail will be generated requesting the supervisor to complete the form electronically. The 'send email' button should be clicked for the email to be sent. The supervisor's report is an integral part of the application and without it the application will not be considered for funding.
- Successful applicants must provide renewed proof of registration annually for the consecutive years of NRF funding. Failure to comply will lead to the cancellation of the grant.
- Should a grantholder not have obtained his/her Doctorate within six years of funding in this Funding Instrument, no further funding will be considered beyond the sixth year.
- If applying in Thuthuka for the first time and the project was previously funded by the NRF as a grantholder-linked bursary or funding from the Emerging Researchers section of the NRF, progress to date needs to be provided in the proposal. The years of previous funding for the Doctoral degree will be taken into consideration when funding is awarded.

### **3.2 Post-PhD Track**

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the Post-PhD Track:

- Only South African citizens.
- Should have obtained a Doctoral degree no more than five years prior to the date of first application.

### **3.3 NRF Rating Track (Unrated Researchers)**

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the NRF Rating Track:

- Only South African citizens and South African permanent residents with a valid South African Identity Number. Applicants applying for permanent residence will not be considered.
- Should have obtained a Doctoral degree. The Doctoral degree should be no more than 8 years prior to the date of first application.
- A research focus has been identified in an area in which the applicant plans to establish a research track record.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have been unable to establish themselves as researchers due to limited research opportunities (e.g. working at an institution with limited research

infrastructure and research activity, or due to family responsibilities). If such limitations are not clear from the proposal and confirmed in the applicant's career profile, the application will not be considered.

## 4 Granting Rules

### 4.1 Funding Duration

Funding is available for a maximum period of six years (in two three-year cycles) within all Tracks. Grants are funded annually, on the basis of progress reported in the Annual Progress Reports (APR) that is submitted to the NRF. New applications should be submitted for **each** three-year funding cycle.

A grantholder may apply for participation in a different Track for the second funding cycle after successfully completing their project in the first cycle.

The following apply if a grantholder in the PhD Track completes his/her Doctoral degree within a three-year cycle:

- If the Doctoral qualification is completed within the first 3-year cycle, the grantholder may apply for funds for a new project in the Post-PhD Track for a second cycle, after which he/she will be eligible for a third 3-year cycle in the same Track.
- If the qualification is completed in the second 3-year cycle, the grantholder may apply for funds for a **new** project in the Post-PhD Track for one additional funding cycle.

Grantholders in the PhD Track are therefore eligible for up to three 3-year cycles (9 years) in total within the Funding Instrument provided they complete their Doctoral degrees within the first two funding cycles.

Grantholders that currently receive Thuthuka funding should use this document as the updated Funding Guide. This document should also be used when submitting APRs

### 4.2 Participation across Funding Tracks

Applicants **may not** hold two Thuthuka grants simultaneously. Grantholders may also not apply for funding within a Track in which they have already received funding for two funding cycles. For participation in other NRF funding instruments, the *Overview of Funding Opportunities* document of GMSA (available on the NRF Website) should be consulted.

### 4.3 Exclusions

The Thuthuka Funding Instrument does not award funding for -

- infrastructure for which the Infrastructure Funding Instruments make provision;
- budgets only requesting funding for student support, equipment and/or conference attendance.;

- single-year grants or grants for less than three years, unless the applicant is in the process of completing a doctoral study (applying in the PhD Track);
- Lecturer Replacement, External Supervisory Support, Study/Training Visit Local/Abroad and Sabbatical categories will not be funded by this Instrument.

#### 4.4 Co-funding

The NRF policy on co-funding in this Funding Instrument is a 1:1 funding ratio commitment by the NRF and the applicant's employing institution. By validating the application, the applicant's institution declares its funding commitment for operating costs at the ratio of 1:1. The onus is on the institution to ascertain that all budget rules have been adhered to.

**The Institutional Support** form, which is attached to the Call documents, must be downloaded by the applicant for the Dean of Employing/Affiliated Faculty and Research Office/DA signatures and then **uploaded in the attachment** section. This document is submitted **to confirm and verify the Institution's support to the applicant for the proposed research.**

Failure to submit an Institutional Support Form and/or uploading an incomplete form that is not supported by the Dean of Employing/Affiliated Faculty and Research Office/DA will result in the application being rejected.

#### 4.5 Carry Forward of Grant Funding

The Carry Forward (CF) of unspent/unclaimed funds to the next grant year is not automatic and will only be considered according to the regulations provided in the '*Guidelines for the Carry Forward of Unspent/claimed Grant Allocations*'. All Thuthuka grantholders must submit strong motivations for a CF.

#### 4.6 Multiple Grants

A grantholder may not hold a Thuthuka grant concurrently with -

- a grant as a Director of an NRF Centre of Excellence or Industrial Centre of Excellence; or as a participant in the South African Research Chairs Initiative (unless he/she is a Chairholder of a Tier 2 Research Chair);
- any NRF Knowledge Fields Development grants;
- NRF free-standing or grantholder-linked student support.

For further details refer to the *Overview of Funding Opportunities* document of GMSA or the *Multiple Grant Eligibility* rubric (available on the NRF Website).

## 5 Budget Breakdown and Funding Model

Thuthuka supports the advancement of individuals from Masters' to Doctoral level in all scientific fields. Grants are awarded for well-structured research projects that demonstrate the prudent use of funds. Projects should have clear aims and sound methodologies that support the study objectives. The NRF does not fund any clinical trials projects.

The budgeting model for Thuthuka takes into account two dimensions, namely the human-capital dimension (in terms of race, gender and disability) and the funding Track. Funds are allocated in terms of a horizontal budget split across the three funding Tracks (namely, PhD, Post-PhD and NRF Rating) with weights assigned to each Track on the basis of its relative importance. For example, the PhD Track is allocated 40% of the overall budget in line with the NRF's initiative of the 'PhD as Driver' for the knowledge-based economy strategy.

Since Thuthuka is aimed at the development and advancement of designated groups per race and/or gender, the Funding Instrument has set the following targets for allocation of grants to designated groups, to bring about this transformation:

- **PhD Track:** 80% of all funded applicants to be Black; and up to 60% to be female.
- **Post-PhD Track:** 80% of all funded applicants to be Black; and 50% to be female.
- **NRF Rating Track:** 80% of all funded applicants to be Black; and 50% to be female.

The intended Thuthuka budget split in respect of the overall budget is:

- PhD Track: 40%
- Post-PhD Track: 30%
- NRF Rating Track: 30%.

The grant covers Research Operating Costs and Student Support and it excludes costs incurred by the researcher or institution for research prior to the approval of the Thuthuka award.

## 6 Categories of Support

When completing the project budget, applicants need to consider all costs that could impact on undertaking the research, such as the direct, indirect and human capacity development costs. The amounts allowed per item, by the NRF, need to be considered as indicated below.

### 6.1 Human Capacity Development (Grantholder-linked Student Support)

Grantholder-linked student support is available only to the applicant's human resources (students and staff) directly involved **in the grantholder's project**. Greater participation of women, black and disabled students are specifically encouraged.

The grantholder is expected to provide mentoring and supervision to all NRF-funded students supported within his/her grant. The number of students per grantholder is therefore carefully monitored in accordance with the experience of the grantholder.

Student support is available in the following four categories:

- **Student Assistantships:** For full-time final-year undergraduate/diploma and Honours/4<sup>th</sup> year BTech students.
- **Postgraduate Bursaries:** For Masters and Doctoral students with a research component of more than 50%.
- **Staff Development Grants:** For staff members who are registered for a Masters or Doctoral degree under the grantholder’s supervision or co-supervision, and who are linked to the research plan for which the grantholder is being funded in Thuthuka.

**Staff Development Grants, Postgraduate Bursaries** and **Student Assistantships** are awarded for a full calendar year or for a semester (half value), depending on the date of registration of the student; the date of submission of the nomination; and the period for which the award is requested, as indicated in the table “Awards and maximum period of support”.

Students may hold only one Scholarship or Bursary from the NRF or another state-funded organisation at a one time. This includes NRF/DST Internship.

Staff members are not eligible for Masters and Doctoral grantholder-linked bursaries and should not be nominated in that category but in the Staff Development Grant category, which provides for Masters or Doctoral nominees. In this case, the grantholder has to be the (co-) supervisor of the staff member registered for a higher degree.

Post graduate students, including Internships, may hold only one Scholarship or Bursary from the NRF or another state-funded organisation at any one time.

The award of bursaries in each Track is restricted to the following total per level, *viz.*

<b>PhD Track</b>	2 Student Assistantships (Final-year Undergraduate degree/diploma and/or Honours/4 <sup>th</sup> ; year BTech) 1 Master’s
<b>Post-PhD Track</b>	2 Doctoral students 2 Masters Honours/4 <sup>th</sup> year BTech as requested and depending on available funds
<b>NRF Rating Track</b>	4 Postgraduate Students (any combination of Masters and/or Doctoral) Honours as requested and depending on available funds

**Note:** Staff Development Grants get preference and are allocated within the total numbers indicated above.

Exclusions:

- Postdoctoral Fellowships are not supported within this Funding Instrument.
- No bursaries for new Doctoral students will be awarded to grantholders in the last year of the first or second cycle of a project (3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> year of funding).
- Grantholders in the PhD Track will not be allowed to request Doctoral grantholder-linked bursaries.

### 6.1.1 Student Assistantships

Student Assistantships are available to full-time Final-year Undergraduate/diploma and Honours/4<sup>th</sup> year BTech students. Nominees should show potential for postgraduate study and research; participate in the grantholder's research project in addition to their normal studies; and have maintained acceptable grades. The grantholder is responsible for supervising and mentoring these students. The purpose of these assistantships is both to provide assistance to the grantholder and to attract promising students into postgraduate studies.

At least 50% of the students nominated by each grantholder for Student Assistantships must be Black (African, Indian or Coloured) South African citizens. **Permanent residents of South Africa are not eligible for Student Assistantships.**

### 6.1.2 Postgraduate Bursaries

Grantholder-linked postgraduate bursaries are available to students who are supervised or co-supervised by the grantholder and who work on his/her Thuthuka funded project.

Bursaries for degrees by coursework are supported, provided that the research component of the degree comprises more than 50% of the degree and is externally evaluated.

### 6.1.3 Staff Development (SD) Grants

Applicants **are not** eligible for Staff Development Grants for themselves. The following criteria and rules apply:

- full-time permanent/contract staff other than the grantholder, who are studying towards a Master's or Doctoral degree under the (co-)supervision of the grantholder through their involvement in the grantholder's project. It is the responsibility of the grantholder to check the eligibility of the staff member before submitting the nomination.
- Staff Development Grants are available to staff members at the applicant/grantholder's own institution who will receive a higher qualification; or staff registered at other universities and are directly involved in the grantholder's project.
- If the nominee is employed on a fixed-term appointment, this should be on a full-time basis and specified as such on the nomination form. If appointed on a contract basis, the contract should cover the period of NRF funding for this grant.
- The Thuthuka funding may only be used for research related operating costs of the staff member's research as well as costs for travel and accommodation to visit their external (co-)supervisor. SD bursars are not eligible for Top Up.

#### **These grants may be used for:**

- attendance of local conferences where the staff member will present the results of his/her research in a full presentation or poster;
- attendance of workshops directly related to the NRF funded project;
- attendance of conferences abroad would only be considered at Doctoral level with a strong motivation from the grantholder; and
- printing and binding of finalised thesis.

### May not be used for:

- registration/class fees;
- subscription to journals, inter-library loans, etc.;
- membership fees
- visits abroad except at Doctoral level as indicated above;
- computer hardware\*;
- temporary support (including ad hoc/research/technical assistance or lecturer replacement)\*
- consultancy fees; • remuneration for supervisors;
- purchase of books, articles, and journals\*;
- stationary, administrative costs;
- telephone/fax costs; and
- purchase of cellphones.

\*Based on the field of study or nature of the research undertaken, consideration could be given to items in these categories.

### **Awards and Maximum Period of Support**

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>VALUE OF SUPPORT (per annum)*</b>	<b>MAXIMUM PERIOD OF SUPPORT</b>
<b>Student Assistantships (only full-time)</b>		
Final-year undergraduate degree/diploma	R8 000	1 year
BTech/4 <sup>th</sup> year Honours	R30 000	1 year
<b>Postgraduate Bursaries</b>		
Masters full-time	R50 000	2 years
Masters part-time	R10 000	3 years
Doctoral full-time	R70 000	3 years
Doctoral part-time	R12 000	5 years
<b>Staff Development Grants</b>		
Masters level	R25 000	3 years
Doctoral level	R25 000	5 years

\* 50% of the amount indicated is allocated for semester grants.

All budget requests should be well motivated according to the requirements of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument.

Student intake into this Funding Instrument is according to the *Ministerial Guidelines for Improving Equity in the Distribution of the DST/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships* (January 2013). The ratio for such student intake is as follows:

- 87% South African (including permanent residents);
- 5% SADC;
- 4% Rest of the African continent; and
- 4% from non-African countries.

## 6.2 Operating Costs

### 6.2.1 Research, *ad hoc* and Technical Assistance

#### Goal

To provide support, at a specialised technical skill level, to an applicant to complete the project if a skills gap exists in the research team.

#### Eligibility

Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.

Appointees as Temporary Support Staff must have a minimum qualification of a BTech or Honours. Technical Assistance Support (e.g. services of a statistician) includes using statistical software packages (e.g. SPSS, SAS, HLM etc.) to analyse data. Applicants are required to submit the following:

- Details on research assistance required;
- Identified skills gap in the research team;
- Expected skills transfer, if applicable; and
- Detailed cost breakdown, e.g. technical assistant work for three hours per day for a total period of three months, at a rate of R80 rand per hour.

#### Exclusion

Administrative and/or secretarial support.

### 6.2.2 Research Materials and Supplies

#### Goal

To provide support to applicants for the direct costs incurred on a research project. These items must be directly related to the project and are considered the 'consumables' for the proposed research e.g. disposables and consumables.

Research Materials and Supplies is a compulsory category of funding. However, should your research not require this, please substantiate in the application.

**Consumables** are any items with a life expectancy of generally less than a year, and which are consumed in the normal course of operation. **NB. Laboratory consumables** such as equipment with a value of less than R3 000 should be captured under consumables even if not consumed in the normal course of operations e.g pipettes.

#### Eligibility

- Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.
- Only direct costs are covered.
- Every type of purchase must be clearly identified individually and be well-motivated in the budget submission.

Applicants are required to motivate the following:

- A detailed description of items, e.g. description of the consumable, quantity, reagent grade and cost per unit;
- Survey related costs, e.g. number of questionnaires, stationary, photocopies, etc.; and
- Details of singular items above R2 000.

**Exclusions**

- Indirect costs (overheads);
- Registration fees for enrolment;
- Basic office equipment;
- General stationary, photocopying and printing costs;
- Journal publications, journal subscription costs and textbooks;
- Telephone, fax and internet costs;
- Personal laptops, computer hardware, and purchase or renewal of software licenses unless for specialised equipment and software licences.
- Any funding line that is listed as: 'miscellaneous, other' or 'etc.'

**Maximum Funding**

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R100 000 per year.

### **6.2.3 Conference Attendance**

**Goal**

To provide support to an applicant that intends to attend national and/or international conferences as a mechanism to further the goals of their projects.

In all cases a **motivation, should be submitted.**

**Eligibility**

- Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks who are presenting a paper or poster at a conference in the field of the research project funded by the NRF.
- Applies to applicants where -
  - a conference has been identified; and
  - a paper or poster will be presented.

In addition, preference will be for conferences where applicants can demonstrate –

- networking opportunities;
  - launch of collaboration; and/or
  - professional society/association meetings.
- Attendance of international conferences in subsequent years will be considered only if the grantholder's paper at the previous international conference, for which funding was awarded, has been published in a peer-reviewed journal or proceedings, or if evidence of acceptance for publication is supplied.

- Grantholders may apply for support for all nominated postgraduate students to attend **reputable local events** (conferences, seminars and workshops). The grantholder should motivate how their participation and attendance will benefit the research project.

**NB:** Attendance of a workshop will only qualify if the workshop is attached to the conference, with capacity building initiatives.

**Exclusions:**

- Visa and permit fees;
- Events not attached to the conference;
- Presentation of the same work at multiple conferences; or
- Attendance of more than one conference abroad per year.

**Maximum Funding:**

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of:

- R4 000 per year for local conferences held in South Africa.
- R17 000 per year for conferences held abroad.

**6.2.4 Funding for Persons with Special Needs**

Funding may be considered for applicants/team members with disabilities and other special needs as specified in the *Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities*, as stated in the *Employment Equity Act* (No. 55 of 1998). A clear motivation should be provided in the Research Materials and Supplies category of funding.

**6.2.5 Visiting Scientist/Mentorship**

**Goal**

To provide support to applicants to invite (a) visitor/s to the applicant's employing institution, who has special skills that can add value to the project at technical, scientific, strategic and/or human capacity building levels. Visiting scientists should be individuals of good standing in their research fields and may be drawn from institutions in South Africa or abroad.

**Eligibility**

Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.

The visiting scientist should make a contribution to the research project in the following categories:

- Technical skills or knowledge transfer.
- Human capacity building: Student interaction (faculty interaction, seminars and lectures).

Applicants are required to submit:

- At the minimum a preliminary plan that must have been discussed with the visiting scientist;
- A detailed cost breakdown;
- Information on other sources of funding available; and
- An outline of the outcomes that will be achieved including -
  - Skills or knowledge transfer; and
  - Contribution to the research at a strategic level.

There are no limits on the number of visitors, e.g. the visiting scientist and mentor need not be the same visitor. Repeat visits by the same scientists will only be considered if active research collaboration exists.

### **Maximum Funding**

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R60 000 per year per applicant, awarded on a *pro rata* basis.

## **6.2.6 Research Equipment**

### **Goal**

To provide support to applicants for the purchase of equipment, contributing to the purchase of large equipment, or covering the maintenance, service or upgrade costs for equipment.

### **Eligibility**

Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- Details of laboratory equipment to be purchased, e.g. balance, water bath, autoclave, water purification system, gel dryer, micro pipettes;
- A motivation for specialised hardware and software, e.g. audio-visual equipment, and specialised software;
- If more than one item of a particular piece of equipment is purchased, a motivation per application should be provided;
- Maintenance costs, for new equipment that is purchased with NRF funding, must be budgeted for (if not requested in this application);
- Equipment should be purchased following the institutional procurement policies; and
- If the funds are not used to purchase equipment, but to cover equipment maintenance/Service/upgrade costs, provide at the minimum the following:
  - Detailed description of the equipment.
  - Details of the specific maintenance or service or upgrade.

### **Exclusions**

- Personal laptops, net books, hand-held notebooks, and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices.

## **Maximum Funding**

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R50 000 per year per applicant.

**NB: Requests for funding for equipment valued between R1 000 000 and R10 000 000 should be directed to the Infrastructure Funding Instruments for support. Information is available at [http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding\\_overview.php](http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php).**

### **6.2.7 Domestic Travel**

#### **Goal**

To provide support to applicants, or students of the applicant (only those funded by the NRF within this project), to cover travel for research and fieldwork that is related to the research project.

When determining the cost pertaining to domestic travel, researchers must ensure that the most economical and safe transport is utilized.

#### **Eligibility**

Applies to applicants and their students for application in all the funding Tracks.

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- A motivation and purpose of the travel that is related to the project objectives and methodology.
- Detailed budget breakdown including:
  - Cost for economic air travel.
  - For travel by road, the number of kilometres to be travelled and costs based on the applicant's institutional rates.
  - Type and cost of accommodation and duration of stay.
  - Subsistence allowance based on the applicant's institutional rates.

#### **Exclusions**

Meetings, workshops, networking and collaboration event.

## **Maximum Funding**

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R10 000 per year per applicant.

## Categories of Support and Maximum Amounts Funded

CATEGORY OF SUPPORT	MAXIMUM AMOUNT (NRF contribution)
Research, <i>ad hoc</i> and technical assistance	R40 000 per annum awarded on a <i>pro rata</i> basis
Local conference	R4 000 per annum
Conference abroad	R17 000 per annum
Visiting scientists/mentorship	R60 000 pro rata for a maximum of 12 months
Research equipment	R50 000 maximum per annum
Research materials and supplies	R100 000 maximum per annum
Domestic travel	R10 000 maximum per annum

In order to realistically gauge the full extent of the proposed research, details of other sources of financial support for the research must be submitted in the application budget. This in no way compromises or disadvantages the proposal; instead, knowledge of the commitment and contribution of other contributors (where applicable) serves to better understand the feasibility of the proposed research project.

**All grants allocated are subject to compliance with the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG) as specified in attachments to the Award Letter to successful applicants.**

## 7 Quick Overview of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument

	<i>PhD TRACK</i>	<i>POST-PhD TRACK</i>	<i>NRF RATING TRACK</i>
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	Applicant must be a South African citizen.	Applicant must be a South African citizen.	Applicant must be a South African citizen or have a Permanent South African Resident status with a valid South African Permanent Resident Identity Number .
	Applicant should be generally under the age of 45 years at the time of first application.	Applicant should be generally under the age of 45 years at the time of first application.	No age restriction applies.
	Applicant must be employed at public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis. The contract appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three-year grant.	Applicant must be employed at public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis. The contract appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three-year grant.	Applicant must be employed at public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis. The contract appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three-year grant.
	Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.	Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.	Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.
	Applicant must hold a Master's degree.	Applicant must hold a Doctoral degree awarded no more than five years prior to the date of first application.	Applicant must hold a Doctoral degree awarded no more than eight years prior to the date of first application.
	The institution at which the applicant is employed must be committed to a 1:1 funding partnership with the NRF, based on the total research operating costs awarded.	The institution at which the applicant is employed must be committed to a 1:1 funding partnership with the NRF, based on the total research operating costs awarded.	The institution at which the applicant is employed must be committed to a 1:1 funding partnership with the NRF, based on the total research operating costs awarded.

	<b>PhD TRACK</b>	<b>POST-PhD TRACK</b>	<b>NRF RATING TRACK</b>
	The proposal must be endorsed by the DA of the institution at which the applicant is employed.	The proposal must be endorsed by the DA of the institution at which the applicant is employed.	The proposal must be endorsed by the DA of the institution at which the applicant is employed.
	Proof of Registration for Doctoral studies must be attached to the application or submitted with the signed Conditions of Grant.	Applicants may not be an NRF-rated researcher at the time of the Thuthuka application. Should an NRF Evaluation and Rating application and a Thuthuka application be submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the Thuthuka grant will not be awarded.	Applicants may not be an NRF-rated researcher at the time of the Thuthuka application. Should an NRF Evaluation and Rating application and a Thuthuka application be submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the Thuthuka grant will not be awarded.
	Recommendation by the supervisor/project leader in support of the Thuthuka award/application is required.	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A	Applicants must have identified a research focus in an area in which they plan to establish a research track record.  Applicants must demonstrate that they have been unable to establish themselves as researchers due to limited research opportunities (e.g. working in an institution with limited research infrastructure and research activity).
<b>Types of support</b>	Research materials and supplies.	Research materials and supplies.	Research materials and supplies.
	Grantholder-linked Student Support (up to Masters level) (limited to a maximum of one Masters and two final-year/Honours bursaries per grantholder).	Grantholder-linked Student Support.	Grantholder-linked Student Support.
	Provision for the establishment of a mentoring relationship.	Provision for the establishment of a mentoring relationship.	N/A

	<b>PhD TRACK</b>	<b>POST-PhD TRACK</b>	<b>NRF RATING TRACK</b>
		research/technical assistance.	research/technical assistance.
	Provision for a staff development grant for staff members who will obtain a Master's degree by participating in the grantholder's project.	Provision for staff development grants for staff members, <u>other than the applicant</u> , who will obtain a Master's or Doctoral degree by participating in the grantholder's project.	Provision for staff development grants for staff members, <u>other than the applicant</u> , who will obtain a Master's or Doctoral degree by participating in the grantholder's project.
	Research instrumentation/ equipment. The maximum contribution by the NRF is R50 000.	Research instrumentation/ equipment. The maximum contribution by the NRF is R50 000.	Research instrumentation/ equipment. The maximum contribution by the NRF is R50 000.
	A well-motivated budget for domestic travel for research purposes.	A well-motivated budget for domestic travel for research purposes.	A well-motivated budget for domestic travel for research purposes.
	One local conference per year for the applicant, to present a paper or poster.	One local conference per year for the applicant, to present a paper or poster.	One local conference per year for the applicant, to present a paper or poster.
	One conference abroad for the applicant biennially to present a paper or poster from which a peer-reviewed published article should be produced. An application for any subsequent conferences abroad will be considered only if the requirements for the previous one have been fulfilled.	One conference abroad annually to present a paper or poster from which a peer-reviewed published article should be produced. An application for any subsequent conference abroad will be considered only if the requirements for the previous one have been fulfilled.	One conference abroad annually to present a paper or poster from which a peer-reviewed a published article should be produced. An application for any subsequent conference abroad will be considered only if the requirements for the previous one have been fulfilled.
<b>Outputs per three year cycle</b>	A minimum of one publication biennially on the Thuthuka-funded research project in a peer-reviewed journal, or a recognised equivalent research output.	A minimum of two publications per cycle on the Thuthuka funded research project in peer-reviewed journals, or recognised equivalent research outputs.	A minimum of three publications on the Thuthuka funded research project in peer-reviewed journals, or recognised equivalent research outputs.

	<b>PhD TRACK</b>	<b>POST-PhD TRACK</b>	<b>NRF RATING TRACK</b>
<b>Outputs at end of full support period</b>	N/A	At least two postgraduate students at Masters and/or Doctoral level supervised or co-supervised and completing their studies.	At least two postgraduate students at Masters and/or Doctoral level supervised or co-supervised and completing their studies.
	Completion of a Doctoral degree.	N/A	NRF rating or application for NRF rating by the end of the funding period.
	At least three papers presented at local and/or international conferences.	At least four papers presented at local and international conferences.	At least six papers presented at local and international conferences.
	A minimum of three publications in peer-reviewed journals or recognised equivalent research outputs.	A minimum of four publications in peer-reviewed journals or recognised equivalent research outputs.	A minimum of six publications in peer-reviewed journals or recognised equivalent research outputs.

## 8 Application Process

The NRF issues a Call for proposals to the Thuthuka Funding Instrument annually, which is placed on the NRF website and is accessible online at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. The Thuthuka Funding Instrument does not accept more than one application per applicant within a three-year funding cycle; although a project proposal that has previously been rejected by the NRF may be revised and resubmitted in this period. In such cases, any revision or reworking of the proposal to accommodate the reviewers' feedback on the initial application should be explained and pointed out in the revision.

**The processing of a grant application takes approximately six months from the time of submission to the announcement of the outcome of the review of the application.**

### 8.1 How to Submit Applications

Applications are available for completion on the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za> from **28 April until 24 June 2016**. Applicants are advised to complete their proposals as soon as possible to prevent IT system overload near the closing date.

This is an electronic submission system and applicants need to be registered on the system in order to create and complete an application. Applicants registered on the NRF Online System (<http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za>) before February 2012, their details would have been migrated to the new NRF Online Submission System (<https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>). Applicants that experience problems accessing the system with their NRF Online password should use the **Forgotten Password button to reset their password**.

If not yet registered on the NRF Online Submission System, applicants should first register to access the application form.

**Applicants are urged to complete or update ALL screens of the CV, including the Research Profile and Research Outputs, before creating an application as this information is referred to in the review process.**

When the applicant submits an application, it will be routed to the Designated Authority (DA) in the Research Office of his/her institution for internal review and validation. Late applications, additional supporting documentation or information received after the closing date will not be accepted or considered. Applications or budgets uploaded in the attachment section of the application will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

Applicants must ensure that they adhere to their institution's internal closing date for submission of their application to allow for internal institutional screening and review. The internal closing date will be determined by the respective research offices and is usually at least two weeks prior to the NRF's closing date.

The NRF cannot process applications or Annual Progress Reports (APRs) that are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect information, or fail to follow instructions - such applications

or APRs will be rejected. Applications or APRs must be completed in sufficient detail to allow comprehensive review and evaluation by internal and external reviewers. In addition to the electronic application and required attachments, the NRF may request additional information or documentation to support an application.

Failure to supply such information or documentation upon request may result in the rejection of the application.

It is important that all proposals are screened and approved by internal institutional processes **before** submission to the NRF. Institutional authorities should take particular care regarding the budget information included in applications. It should be taken into consideration that the amounts requested from the NRF constitute 50% of the total project budget, up to the maximum amounts indicated in this Funding Guide, as the employing institution will be committed to funding the balance in terms of operating expenses. Applicants should provide a **detailed motivation** for each item for which funds are requested. The NRF assumes that the respective DAs are satisfied with the standard of all proposals validated and submitted, and that the institution approves and supports the proposed research.

## 8.2 Screening and Review Processes

### 8.2.1 Overview of the Screening Process

All applications validated by institutions and submitted to the NRF are screened by the NRF for compliance with the requirements of the Call for Proposals, the stipulations set out in this Funding Guide, and the content requirements indicated in the online application screens. Applications that fail to meet the requirements and stipulations are rejected.

### 8.2.2 Overview of the Review Process

The NRF's peer review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a two-tiered review process, firstly for remote review and secondly for panel review.

#### 8.2.2.1 Remote Peer Review

After the closing date for the submission of applications, all eligible applications are subjected to remote peer review. Any information submitted as attachments that should have been completed in the Thuthuka application form renders the application incomplete resulting in a rejection. The reviewers are selected from the list of suggested reviewers provided by the applicant, as well as additional reviewers selected by the Reviews & Evaluation (RE) staff of the NRF from existing databases and other sources. Applicants are encouraged to suggest reviewers from abroad. A minimum of six written reviews per application are solicited, with the ultimate aim of eliciting at least three well-substantiated remote review reports per application for submission to the panel review process.

Applications are sent for review to researchers with selected research knowledge and insight in relevant disciplines, after which written online review reports are submitted to the NRF. The remote review reports, together with the proposals and supporting documentation are then deliberated upon in the Panel Review Process.

#### **8.2.2.2 Panel Peer Review**

Following the remote review process, applications are subjected to panel peer review. The postal reviewers' reports serve as the basis for discussion and review by the panel members.

Panel members are selected from the NRF database, which is updated on a continuous basis, as well as other sources. In making the selection, the expertise and experience of individuals in funding proposal adjudication are taken into account. In assessing the proposals, the postal reviewers' reports are referred to, and agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard.

The Panel provides recommendations to the NRF. The final funding decision is made by the NRF. In awarding grants in this Funding Instrument, the NRF takes into account the recommendations of the peer review panels, budget motivations by the applicant, the objectives and equity targets of the Instrument, as well as the availability of funds.

### **8.3 Ranking of Proposals**

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate proposals, based on the Thuthuka Funding Instrument criteria, in order to determine applicants that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding, irrespective of the Funding Track, are evaluated according to a number of predetermined criteria. Proposals are assessed and ranked on the basis of qualifiers as listed in the table below. Each area is given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used per funding Track as well as their relative weighting.

## NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Thuthuka Funding

Criterion	Description	% Weighting		
		<i>PhD Track</i>	<i>Post-PhD Track</i>	<i>NRF-rating Track</i>
<b>Track Record of Applicant</b>	<p>This refers to past research outputs recognised by the NRF. This refers to outputs such as the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents.</p> <p>Reviewers will be required to comment on whether the standing and research record of the researcher suggest that the applicant has the appropriate research experience to undertake the proposed research.</p>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Research Proposal</b>	<p>This refers to scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge; interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary aspects; match between the research question and the proposed research methodology and alignment with the applicant’s institutional strategy and/or any national research strategy.</p> <p>Scientific and Technical Quality – Reviewers will evaluate whether the project will * make a contribution to new knowledge and new methodologies in the field;            * apply existing knowledge and methodologies in the field;            * involve unique application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field;            * or utilise the application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field.</p> <p>Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects – Reviewers will assess whether Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects have been fully-, partially or not explored in the research proposal.</p>	<b>35</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>

Criterion	Description	% Weighting		
		PhD Track	Post-PhD Track	NRF-rating Track
	<p>Research objectives to match aims of study – Reviewers will assess whether the research objectives are clearly stated and on whether they are appropriate to meet the aims of the study; are sound but have inconsistencies and can be refined; are appropriate but only partially address the aims of the study; or are not appropriate to meet the aims of the study.</p> <p>Research methodology to match research objectives – Reviewers will comment on whether the research methodology is appropriate to meet objectives of study; is sound but has inconsistencies and can be refined; is appropriate but only partially addresses study objectives; or not appropriate to meet objectives of study.</p>			
<p><b>Human Capital Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student involvement</li> <li>• Representation from designated / under-represented groups</li> </ul>	<p>Greater emphasis is placed on the number of students trained and the participation of researchers and/or students from under-represented groups (i.e. black, female and disabled) in research projects.</p>	10	20	20
<p><b>Project Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project organisation</li> <li>• Project scheduling</li> <li>• Budget</li> </ul>	<p>Project organisation refers to how project teams and human resources are composed; the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of team members; the proposed research activities; and the supervision.</p> <p>Project scheduling refers to the work breakdown of the project to ensure that specific outcomes are achieved; as well as the objectives and associated timelines in place to divide the scope of work into manageable activities.</p> <p>Project budgeting refers to effective planning and budgeting of resources.</p>	20	20	20

Criterion	Description	% Weighting		
		<i>PhD Track</i>	<i>Post-PhD Track</i>	<i>NRF-rating Track</i>
<b>Collaboration on Research Project</b>	<p>In order to address historical imbalances, research collaboration between researchers at various institutions is encouraged, especially between institutions with limited research infrastructure and research activity, and research-intensive institutions with varied capabilities.</p> <p>Reviewers will be required to comment on whether research collaborations are required to meet the study objectives and have been considered, and to also comment on whether the research collaborations are appropriate to meet objectives of the study and have been fully addressed; are appropriate but only partially meet the study objectives; or are not appropriate to meet the study objectives.</p>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Supervision/Mentorship</b>	In the Post-PhD and NRF-Rating Tracks, the supervisory track record of their academic standing and past outputs.	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Expected Outputs</b>	This refers to NRF recognised research outputs such as the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents. Successful applicants will be expected to deliver on all anticipated outputs or risk suspension of their funding. Reviewers will be required to assess whether the proposed outputs are fully-, partially- or not achievable within the given timeframe.	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Potential Impact</b>	Particular attention is paid to proposals with the potential to contribute to the strategic goals of the knowledge economy.	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

## 8.4 Application Feedback and Disputes

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the funding decision recommendations have been approved by the Executive Director: HICD, applicants are notified of the outcome, whether positive or negative, by the RE Directorate with feedback from the peer review panel process. GMSA will notify successful applicants, in writing, of the funding awarded towards the successful execution of their proposal.

Any disputes resulting from the review process or contractual arrangements will be resolved according to the provisions in the contractual agreement. The level of resolution will depend on the nature and complexity of the dispute.

The following escalation process will be followed in resolving disputes:

- Review Officer: RE
- Executive Director: RE

Any such appeal needs to follow the appropriate Appeals Process, as managed by the RE Directorate.

## 8.5 Accountability within NRF

The NRF operates a matrix management system with a centralised GMSA Directorate responsible for administering and managing grants across a wide portfolio of funding instruments.

The Executive Director: HICD is accountable for the Thuthuka Funding Instrument, and the Director: HICD is responsible for the management of the objectives of the Funding Instrument.

Responsibility for the effective management and administration of the Thuthuka grants rests with the Director: GMSA, who is accountable to the Executive Director: GMSA.

# 9 Grantholder Responsibilities

## 9.1 Reporting

Continued funding beyond the first year is dependent on the submission of an APR to the NRF each grant year. Continued funding will be considered based on satisfactory progress.

A Final Report must be submitted three months after completion of a three-year cycle, or after the completion of the project by the following year once the call for Final Reports is made. Financial reporting on the project should be completed by the institution's Financial Officer at the end of the duration of the award.

**NB: This should be read in conjunction with Section 4.1 of this document (Funding Duration) as well as the CoG that needs to be signed by the Grantholder and the Institution in order for the Grant to be valid.**

## 9.2 Managing Changes during the Project Life Cycle

Changes may occur during the project life cycle due to unforeseen or extenuating circumstances. Please note the following on how to manage the award and subsequent changes (planned or unanticipated) should they arise during the project life cycle.

### 9.2.1 Change Requests

#### 9.2.1.1 Prior Approval Requests

All change requests must be preceded by prior NRF-approval submitted in writing to the GMSA at least 30 days before the proposed change. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office.

#### 9.2.1.2 Grantholder change

The Thuthuka Funding Instrument does not allow a grantholder change. Should there be such a request the new nominated researcher should submit this project as a new application for assessment.

#### Exclusions:

Thuthuka grantholders in the PhD Track working on their doctoral dissertation may not transfer their grant to another grantholder.

#### 9.2.1.3 Changes in project scope

Changes may occur where a project scope needs to be modified from the original research proposal/project design. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office. Grantholders should notify the GMSA in writing of the proposed changes as soon as possible.

## 9.3 Scientific Compliance

### 9.3.1 Methodology

The grantholder takes scientific responsibility for the research to be undertaken, including its objectives and the methodology outlined in the project proposal. The grantholder is required to devote the necessary time to the research project in compliance with the work plan for the research proposal approved by the NRF so as to achieve the project's stated aims and objectives.

### 9.3.2 Intellectual Property Rights

The intellectual capital generated by NRF funded research must be appropriately protected and exploited for the benefit of South Africa. This condition should not interfere with the Intellectual Property Rights arrangements already made, on condition that the majority of the benefits arising from the intellectual capital accrue to South Africa and its citizens. This condition is aligned with the *Intellectual Property Rights Act*,<sup>1</sup> which will override this Condition of Grant.

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<sup>1</sup> RSA (2008). Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008. *Government Gazette*, 22 Dec 2008. Vol 522, no 31745.

### **9.3.3 Ethics**

A grantholder is required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards in conducting the research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It remains the responsibility of the project leader to comply with all relevant regulations in this regard, including those of the institution at which the research is carried out. An ethical clearance certificate (where applicable) must be submitted to the NRF in respect of successful applications before funding can be released.

### **9.3.4 Access to Data**

The data generated from the proposed research must become available to other researchers working in the same field. Therefore, it is important that the data is provided to domain specific databases or, in the absence thereof, to the South African Data Archive (SADA).

## **9.4 Supervision**

In the PhD Track, the grantholder AND the appointed supervisor have a commitment to the grantholder's nominated students working on the NRF-funded project. Grantholders must ensure that students receive adequate supervisory support to undertake project-related research that contributes towards the degree for which the students are registered. Grantholders are required to submit an APR on the NRF electronic submission system detailing both project and student related progress during the given funding year. Failure to comply with this requirement, or submission of a report that the NRF considers inadequate, may lead to the suspension or termination of the research grant.

## **9.5 Premature Termination**

If a grantholder is unable to complete a research project for which the NRF has awarded a grant, it is the responsibility of the grantholder, through the institution's DA, to notify the Director: GMSA of the intention to prematurely terminate the project. Premature termination of a research project may occur for a number of reasons. Taking into account the circumstances and reasons for termination the grantholder, in consultation with the NRF, will decide on the best course of action and possible outcomes including, but not limited to, the final termination of the project and the recall of funds expended. Irrespective of the decision taken, the grantholder is required to submit a Final Report to the NRF. The grantholder must ensure that each student involved in or directly linked to the project completes a progress report on their research project, which should be endorsed by the grantholder and the institution's DA. These progress reports will be used in considering any further applications for NRF funding to complete the work, according to the criteria applicable to the Funding Instrument to which any such application is submitted.

## 10 Contact Details

### Director: GMSA

Mrs Thashni Pillay: Emerging Research Grants  
Telephone: (012) 481 4241  
Fax: 012 349 1179  
E-mail address: [thashni.maistry@nrf.ac.za](mailto:thashni.maistry@nrf.ac.za)

### Professional Officer: GMSA

Ms Sushie Pillay  
Telephone: (012) 481 4178  
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E-mail address: [ppillay@nrf.ac.za](mailto:ppillay@nrf.ac.za)

### Project Team Member: GMSA

Ms Kentse Mabalane  
Telephone: (012) 481 4279  
Fax: 086 697 2792  
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The Professional Officer is responsible for the coordination of grant administration processes and management of Thuthuka grants.

The GMSA Project Team Member is responsible for the coordination of the project-related activities within GMSA to ensure adherence to the timeframes and deliverables of the Thuthuka project.

The Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate of the National Research Foundation (NRF) processes all grant applications and administration and management of grants. Full details of application procedures, eligibility and funding guidelines are explained in this document.

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours (08:00 –16:30), on:

Tel: (012) 481-4202

E-mail: [Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za](mailto:Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za)