



RISA

Research and Innovation
Support and Advancement

**DST – NRF FELLOWSHIPS FOR EARLY CAREER
RESEARCHERS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM**

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Directorate:

**Human and Infrastructure Capacity
Development**

Date:

September 2015

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1. Background

The core mandate of the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF) is to promote and support research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of research. In a globalised world, researcher collaborations are critical for the competitiveness of any country. While international collaboration has always been an intrinsic part of the research and innovation (R&I) endeavour, the forces of competitiveness and globalisation are accelerating the scope, pace and importance of cross-border R&I, strengthened by directed partnerships both within and outside of South Africa. Stakeholders around the world are working to internationalise their R&I efforts, driven by the need to establish a competitive reputation, to access global knowledge and expertise, and to mobilise new resources.

The Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (the UK Academies) and the National Research Foundation of South Africa entered into an agreement (UK-South Africa Newton Fund) with the aim to develop scientific capacity and long-term sustainable economic growth.

This will be achieved through:

- i. Research capacity building – assisting partners to undertake and disseminate scientific research; and
- ii. Broader scientific capacity building – supporting the ability of developing countries to both engage with and make proper use of research and other outputs of science (all inclusive).

The DST-NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK were established under the ‘research capacity building’ strand, and are a partnership between the NRF and prominent UK academies (i.e. the Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, and the Royal Society). The aim of the fellowships is to develop science and innovation partnerships through building research and innovation capacity. The fellowships will facilitate the placement of UK early career researchers (with up to seven years post-PhD experience) at South African public research institutions for a maximum period of six (6) months, in order to enhance and strengthen collaboration, build research capacity and enhance career opportunities for researchers in South Africa and the UK.

2. Rationale

International strategic partnerships remain the vehicle for development within the context of the advancement of research and human capacity development. The fellowships will facilitate the fostering of long-term relations between UK early career researchers and the South African research base through interactions, embarking on research activities of mutual interest leading to improved access to international centres of excellence for UK-based researchers as well as their South African counterparts.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the Fellowships are to:

- To promote the engagement of UK fellows across all disciplines of physical, natural and social sciences, clinical and patient oriented research as well as the humanities, with South African researchers;

- To provide an opportunity for post-doctoral researchers at an early career stage from the UK to work at a South African research institution for a period of up to six months;
- To foster long-term relations between UK early career researchers and the South African research base through interactions, embarking on research activities of mutual interest leading to improved access to international centres of excellence for UK-based researchers as well as their South African counterparts;
- To foster collaboration in order to improve the quality of research outputs by UK and South African researchers;
- To contribute to capacity building of early and established researchers in South Africa and the UK;
- To enhance networking within the UK and South African science systems.

The research may be undertaken in all the disciplines covered by the academies namely the physical, natural, clinical and social sciences and the humanities. A total of 45 fellows will be supported over a three (3) year period. For this particular call thirty (30) grants will be awarded as follows:

- Twelve (12) fellowships in the Natural Sciences and Engineering;
- Six (6) fellowships in patient-oriented research; and
- Twelve (12) fellowships in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

4. Eligibility

The applicant must:

- Be in possession of a PhD;
- Have no more than seven (7) years of active full time postdoctoral experience at the time of application (discounting career breaks, but including teaching experience and/or time spent in industry);
- Be based at a publicly funded UK University or research institute; and
- Have a clearly defined and mutually-beneficial research proposal agreed to with a South African host researcher.

5. Application requirements

- Applicants must provide an official letter of invitation and support from a South African research host. It is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the respective institution to obtain such a letter; and
- Applicants must provide an official letter confirming affiliation to a government funded UK University or research institution.

6. Application process

The NRF will invite applications from fellows who wish to be part of a programme that will support the placement of UK early career researchers (with up to seven (7) years post-PhD experience) at South African public research institutions for a period of three (3) to six (6) months.

Applications should be submitted *via* the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. Further instructions on the application process are available in the DST – NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK *Call Guide for Applications*.

7. Selection criteria

Applications that meet the eligibility criteria and that are completed appropriately, will be subjected to a competitive merit review process. If any information that should have been submitted as attachments is not included in the application, it will be rendered incomplete resulting in a rejection without review. An independent and external review committee will consider all applications and recommend applications for awards to the NRF.

The reviewers are selected by the NRF from existing reviewer databases and other sources. The UK academies may also submit names of potential reviewers to the NRF.

Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Postdoctoral fellowships

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weight (Total = 100%)
Track Record of Applicant	Applicant expertise/training that will enable the applicant to successfully undertake the proposed research.	10%
	The applicant's research track record which could include peer reviewed publications, conference proceedings, research prizes and awards.	10%
Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research	Literature review with citations, significance of the research in terms of the problem statement, aims and objectives. Scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge to be generated.	20%
	Research design, methodology developed to address aims of the research. Provision of workplan and feasible	20%

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weight (Total = 100%)
	timelines and milestones for the research.	
	Alignment with national (at applicant's home country) and institutional research priorities (at host institution).	5%
Institutional Support	Institutional support for the postdoctoral fellowship through infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.	10%
Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research	Details of envisaged realistic outputs of the research such as publications, conference proceedings, toolkits, policy documents.	5%
	Contribution to postdoctoral research skills development in a priority research area (human capacity development of the applicant)	10%
	Potential for socio-economic impact of the research in South Africa	10%
		100%

8. Conditions of award

The award of the South African Fellowship for UK early career researchers will be based on past, current and potential academic performance. Selection criteria will include academic merit, research ability, previous research awards, prizes and honours. In addition to the criteria above the award will be based on the feasibility and merit of the applicant's research project proposal.

Applications must have the support of a South African-based research host and a clear indication of alignment of the fellow's proposed research with the host's research expertise, must be demonstrated.

A letter of invitation from a South African host, including confirmation of the availability of research running costs, laboratory and office space as well as office and laboratory equipment for the fellow's stay must be attached to the application.

9. Value of the Fellowship and Funding

The NRF will cover the costs of the cheapest economy return flight from the UK to South Africa and living expenses including accommodation and ground transport. The value of each fellowship will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for living expenses and ground transport, based on the duration of the research stay in South Africa.

The duration of the fellowship will be for three (3) to six (6) months. The maximum amount per fellowship (all inclusive) is R330 000. Due to the limited number of fellowships available, no follow up visits will be allowed under this scheme.

10. Reporting

For continuous monitoring of the funding instrument, the fellows will be required to submit an exit report to the NRF upon completion of the fellowship, on their overall experience, achievements and outputs as well as any future plans for collaborations. The format of the exit report will be provided by the NRF, against

deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Conditions of Grant.

11. Timelines

Activity	Timelines
Open Call for applications	23 September 2015
Closing date for applications	11 January 2016
Review Process	February 2016
Awarding of Fellowships	February 2016