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Framework & Funding Guide for the Department of Higher Education and Training Research

Chairs in Post-School Education and Training (PSET)

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1. **Strategic Background**

   1.1. **Context**

The *White Paper on Science and Technology* (1996) and *the National Research and Development Strategy* (2002) emphasise the need for South Africa to transform its Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) workforce. Other policy and strategies of government, including the *Human Resource Development Strategy* (2009) and the *Medium Term Strategic Framework* (2009), note the shortage of high-level skills as a significant constraint in the development of the economy and society. In this regard, South Africa must produce a greater number of highly skilled individuals, particularly in SET, to achieve the goal of "*an equitable, sustainable, and inclusive growth path that brings decent work, sustainable livelihoods, education, health, safe and secure communities, and rural development*".

The South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) was established in 2006 by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and managed by the National Research Foundation (NRF) through a contractual agreement with the DST. SARChI is a strategic intervention of the South African government designed to attract and retain excellence in research and innovation at South African universities and Research Councils. In particular, the Funding Instrument is aimed at increasing scientific research capacity through the development of human capacity and stimulating the generation of new knowledge. It is also intended to support the realisation of South Africa's transformation into a knowledge economy in which the generation of knowledge translates into socio-economic benefits.

SARChI is designed to significantly expand the scientific research base of South Africa in a way that supports the implementation of the National Research and Development policies. Since its inception, 223 Research Chairs have been awarded and of those awarded, 203 are operational in various disciplines and research fields. Thus, the SARChI funding instrument has been successful in retaining leading South African researchers and attracting leading foreign researchers and expatriate researchers to South Africa. However, the SARChI has not been as successful in ensuring racial and gender equity. For instance, females compromise 40% of the Chair-holders,

while Blacks, in particular Africans and Coloureds are grossly underrepresented, collectively accounting for only 14% of all Chair-holders.

It is in this context that the NRF has to constantly explore innovative approaches to grow and strengthen the SARChI, especially in the face of budgetary constraints. Consequently, the NRF has entered into an agreement with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to establish three (3) Research Chairs in Post School Education and Training (PSET). These Research Chairs will be funded in partnership with the National Skills Fund (NSF) and the DST.

1.2. **SARChI Aim and Objectives**

Aim

The main goal of SARChI is to strengthen and improve research and innovation capacity of public universities and research councils, in order to produce high-quality postgraduate students and research outputs.

Objectives

- Expand the scientific research and innovation capacity of South Africa;
- Improve South Africa's international research and innovation competitiveness, while responding to social, economic and transformation imperatives of the country;
- Attract and retain excellent researchers and scientists;
- Increase the production of Masters and Doctoral graduates; and
- Create research career pathways for young and mid-career researchers, with a strong research, innovation and human capital development output trajectory.

1.3. **SARChI Guiding Principles**

The following principles will inform the awarding of the Research Chairs to the successful university or research council:

- SARChI is a Funding Instrument for institutions[1]. Research Chairs may be held by persons at a South African public university or research council, in partnership with a

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[1] SARChI Research Chairs are awarded to universities and not the candidate, hence it is the institution's responsibility to find a suitable candidate to occupy the Chair.

public research institution such as another public university, Science Council or a National Research Facility.

- Public universities and research councils in South Africa bid for a Research Chair in an open and competitive process, hence the Research Chair will not be pre-allocated to an institution.

- In the PSET Research Chairs call for proposal, each university may submit a maximum of two (2) applications

- Each Research Chair must be in alignment with the university's Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

- The Chair-holder will be expected to dedicate at least 80% of his/her time conducting research and supervising an average of 10 Masters and Doctoral students[2] per annum.

- Research Chairs are tenable at Tier 1 and 2.

- Criteria for the classification of Tier 1 and 2 Research Chairs are spelt out in Table 1 below.

- Candidates from abroad that are willing to spend at least 50% of their time in South Africa, are eligible for consideration only at the Tier 1 level. The intention is to attract candidates, including African scholars and South Africans in the diaspora, who have distinguished themselves in their research fields. Only South African citizens and permanent residents will be considered at the Tier 2 level and will be required to reside full-time in South Africa for the duration of the award of the Research Chair.

- NRF does not preclude anyone from applying but preference will be given to female, Black and Coloured applicants in the spirit of redress and equity.

- To further ensure equitable distribution of Chairs, while all South African public universities are encouraged to apply, preference will also be given to historically disadvantaged universities and those universities that currently host less than 15 Chairs, provided they meet the minimum requirements for this call.

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[2] This is a guiding number, and encourage Research Chairs to supervise more students with the help of their core research teams.

1.4. **Accountability for SARChI Chairs**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research at the South African host university will be directly accountable for the Research Chair. The chair will fit into the normal management structures of the host institution.

2. Profile of Research Chair and Scope of Research Areas

2.1. **Profile of Candidates**

To be considered for a Research Chair position, the candidate must meet the following minimum criteria[3];

1. The candidate must have a doctoral qualification in Post School Education & Training or related field
2. Must be an established researcher appointed as an Associate or Full Professor at the time of application[4]
3. Extensive track record, conducting quality research in one of the following areas of Post Education and Training:
    a. Community Education and Training
    b. Labour market intelligence
    c. African Languages Learning and Teaching
    d. Entrepreneurship
4. Must have an extensive track record in training and producing quality postgraduate students in the above-mentioned research areas
5. Outstanding research track-record supported by relevant research outputs[5]

2.2. **Research Focus and Scope**

DHET and NRF seek to fill three Research Chairs in the areas of Post School Education and Training. The proposed scope of each Research Chair is intended to support scientific research, development and innovation in the areas listed in Table 1 below.

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[3] Only candidates who meet these minimum requirements will be shortlisted. Institutions are encouraged to ensure that their proposed candidates qualify before approving for submission to the NRF.

[4] Candidates who are still awaiting results from their institutions to become professors will not be considered.

[5] Peer-reviewed journal articles, peer-reviewed conference proceedings, scholarly books and book chapters, patents, invited keynote presentations, conference presentations

Table 1: Proposed research areas for DHET-DST/NRF SARChI Research Chairs

Proposed Research Chair	Description	Alignment with DHET research priority areas
African Languages Teaching	The White Paper on Post School Education and Training indicates that the 'demise of African languages in the academic sphere poses a serious threat to linguistic diversity in South Africa' and that 'a cross-disciplinary approach to a renewed focus on developing African languages in universities is necessary…' (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013, p. 38). An approach is required which develops African languages as languages of literature, science and academia, and as established languages for teaching and learning. It is envisaged that this chair will focus on a linguistically-related set of African languages and that it works to provide the research base for the development and strengthening of the languages as languages of learning and teaching at multiple layers of the education system.	Development and provisioning of African languages are identified as a key theme in the Curriculum, Programmes and Qualifications focus area of the DHET's research agenda 2017-2020.
Entrepreneurship in Post-School Education and Training	South Africa is experiencing high unemployment, and entrepreneurship is seen as one part of the holistic response required to address this challenge. In this regard, PSET education institutions and their graduates represent a valuable resource. However, entrepreneurship historically has not been a strong focus area for PSET institutions. A theoretical and practical knowledge base to inform entrepreneurship in PSET needs to be developed, and a number of focus areas bear further investigation, including student entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship curricula and programmes, and entrepreneurial institutions.	The focus area of Education and Work is part of the DHET's 2017-2020 Research Agenda, and entrepreneurship is a key dimension of the education-work continuum.

Community Education and Training	The White Paper on Post School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) proposed the establishment of community education and training colleges. The research chair will focus on investigating the role of community education and training in addressing the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality facing the country, with a particular focus on rural, urban, poor and other marginalised communities through the provision of education and skills development opportunities. Some of the key research areas for the chair could include the following: • Pedagogies for community education and training • skills for sustainable livelihoods • adult education • worker education	The focus area of Education and Work is part of the DHET's 2017-2020 Research Agenda, and key themes associated with the focus area include: • The impact of Post School Education and Training Education; • Society and work, in the context of a developmental state; and • Community Education and the world of work.

The DHET-DST/NRF SARChI Chairs in PSET are envisaged to be the first portal resource when the Department needs advice in the research areas that each Chair will focus on.

3. Proposal Submission and Assessment Process

Applications will be considered in an open and competitive process. Each university is eligible to nominate two candidates per proposed Research Chair area. However, each candidate must submit a separate full proposal. The application(s) must be authored by the candidate(s) in consultation with the university's Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research.

Each application should give details on:

(i)   The readiness and commitment of the university to provide an enabling environment[6] to ensure the success of the Research Chair;

(ii)   Strengths, capabilities, strategic environment and competencies of the university;

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[6] By providing office /laboratory space, infrastructure and academic support. The institution must also provide leadership and commit to providing financial (directly or indirectly) support.

(iii)   The alignment of the proposed Research Chair with the scope and priority areas described in Table 1 above, as well as the university research strategy;

(iv)   The potential of the proposed Research Chair to enhance the international research and/or innovation competitiveness within the discipline;

(v)   The potential of the research to impact on the social and/or economic development of the country;

(vi)   The potential of the research to inform national policy and strategy in the PSET environment.

(vii)   The research focus of the Research Chair;

(viii)   A proposed plan on how the Research Chair will fulfil SARChI objectives, including the strategic considerations mentioned in the university proposal, and how it will deliver on the university research strategy, and

(ix)   Specific objectives, outputs and outcomes for the five-year period.

The nominated candidate(s)[7] must use the NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/nrfmkii/) to register (if not already registered) and update his/her *curriculum vitae* and complete the application*.*

The application must be endorsed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research and submitted to the NRF by the Designated Authority (DA) at the university. Each university nominating a candidate for the SARChI Research Chair must submit the following documents through the online application:

*   University's Research Strategy;

*   The university's Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training;

*   Details of current academic and research staff of the university in the specific discipline; and

*   Statistics on university research outputs and postgraduate students trained and graduated for the period 2013 to 2017, in the specific discipline.

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[7]   No commitment should be given to the candidate(s) by the university before the NRF has officially informed the University of the Award by means of an award letter.

3.1. **Selection Criteria**

The selection of candidates will be based on the merits of each candidate's full research proposal. This will include the strength of the candidate's profile, including her/his qualifications and experience, publications in the discipline of the Research Chair and postgraduate student supervision track records. This will also include an assessment of the candidate's research and activity plan in respect of its ability to deliver on SARChI objectives, as well as a proposed budget.

The full proposal must also give specific details on:

- Proposed teaching[8] to research time ratio;
- Research objectives for the five year period;
- Expected knowledge[9] outputs in the first five year period;
- Expected human capital[10] outputs in the first five year period; and
- Existing and planned collaborations in the first five-year period.

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[8] Teaching of postgraduate students only. Note: Chair-holders may not spend more than 20% of their time on undergraduate teaching and/or management responsibilities not related to activities of the Research Chair.

[9] Peer-reviewed journal articles, peer-reviewed research reports, policy briefs, peer-reviewed conference proceedings, scholarly books and book chapters, patents, invited keynote presentations, conference presentations etc.

[10] Numbers of Masters and Doctoral graduates and completed postdoctoral fellowships.

SARChI Chair awards will be made based on the following criteria:

Table 2: Criteria for Tier levels

Tier 1 Research Chairs	Tier 2 Research Chairs
- Should be appointable at the level of a full Professor benchmarked nationally; - Should be an outstanding and innovative researcher whose accomplishments have made a major impact in their field; - Should be recognised internationally as an undisputed leader in their field and/or have received substantial international recognition for their research contributions; - Should have a superior record in attracting and successfully supervising post-graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, taking into account the practices of the field; and - Should reside in South Africa full-time, for the duration of the Research Chair award. Candidates from abroad, including African scholars and South Africans in the diaspora, that are willing to spend at least spend 50% of their time within South Africa, are eligible for consideration.	- Should be appointable at the level of an Associate Professor or full Professor benchmarked nationally; - Should be an established researcher, with a strong research, innovation and human capital development output trajectory; - Should have the potential to achieve substantial international recognition for their research contributions in the next five to ten years; - Should have demonstrated the ability to attract and successfully supervise postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows; and - Should reside in South Africa full-time, for the duration of the Research Chair award. Candidates from abroad, including African scholars and South Africans in the diaspora willing to reside in South Africa full-time for the duration of the Chair, are eligible for consideration.

4. Management of the Research Chairs

This section of the Framework and Funding Guide for Applications describes what follows after the Research Chair has been awarded to the university.

4.1. Duration of the Research Chair

The NRF will require the approved candidate for the SARChI Research Chair to enter into a five-year performance agreement in the form of 'Conditions of Grant' and targets. Tier 1 Research Chairs will be tenable for five years, renewable for two further five-year cycles, giving a total lifespan of 15 years, subject to satisfactory performance by the Chair following each five-year in-depth review. In the 5-year review, the NRF will evaluate the performance of the Chair against the research plan and stated objectives in the proposal. Each year, the Research Chair will be expected to submit a Progress report (PR) that will also form part of the 5-year review. Tier 2 Research Chairs will be tenable for five years, renewable for a further five-year cycle giving a total lifespan of 10 years, also subject to satisfactory performance. Eligibility for renewal will be entirely performance-linked and Tier 2 Chairs may be upgraded to a Tier 1 after the first or second five-year funding cycle, based on the recommendations of a five-year panel review.
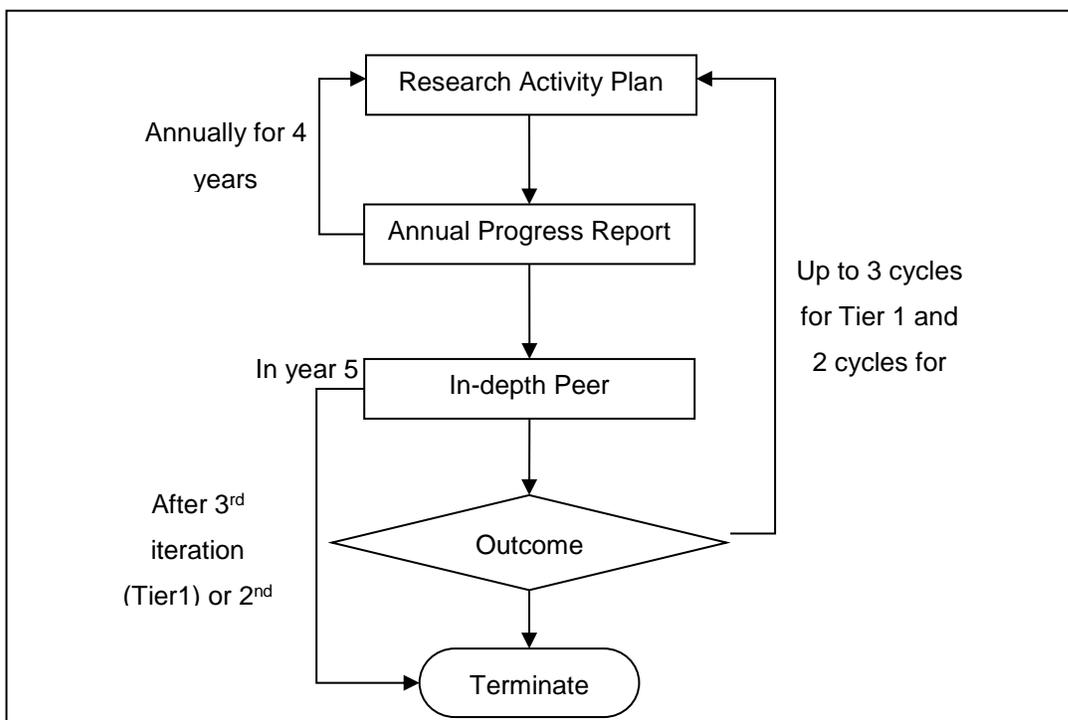

Figure 1: Monitoring and evaluation of Research Chairs over the tenure of the Research Chair

4.2. **Funding Levels**

The SARChI Funding Instrument provides initial awards of up to R2, 680,000 and R1, 680,000 per annum for Tier 1 and Tier 2 Chairs, respectively. Each award covers salaries[11]; postdoctoral fellowships and bursaries for postgraduate students, research operating costs, research equipment & infrastructure, and overheads for the host institution. The guidelines for apportioning of the grant across these categories and the values of fellowships and scholarships are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Guidelines for the SARChI annual budget breakdown for Tier 1 and Tier 2 Research Chairs

Budget category	Sub-item	Cost pa (ZAR)	Minimum number of people	Maximum number of people
Salaries	Chair	550 000 (Tier 2) to 700 000 (Tier 1)	1	1
	Admin support	30 000	0	1
	Research Assistants (per person)	30 000	0	3
Fellowships	Postdoctoral Fellows (per person awarded pro rata)	200 000	1	Variable
Bursaries	Doctoral (full time)	100 000	2	Variable
	Masters (full time)	70 000	2	Variable
	Honours	40 000	4	4
Research equipment or infrastructure	Variable	≤400 000	Not applicable	Not applicable
Running	Variable	Up to 30% of the total budget	Not applicable	Not applicable
University Overheads	Variable	Up to 10% of the total budget	Not applicable	Not applicable

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[11] Salaries of the incumbent and limited administrative support

It is important to note that this budget template provides a guide that stipulates the minimum and maximum amounts per budget category and has the flexibility for the Chair to allocate the SARChI grant based on the research activity plan. The proposed budget will be approved at the commencement of each five-year funding cycle. The incumbent will be given an opportunity, at the end of each calendar year, to make budget adjustments for the subsequent year, in consultation with the Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence (RCCE) Directorate of the NRF.

Tier 1 Chairs will not be eligible for additional NRF parliamentary core grant funding, except in respect of Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers. Incumbents must apply for grants for large equipment through the NRF Infrastructure Funding Instrument.

However, Tier 2 Chairs may apply for NRF grants as outlined in the Multiple Grants Eligibility Overview (http://www.nrf.ac.za/document/multiple-grants-eligibility-overview-july-2015)

Chairs are expected to dedicate at least 80% of their time conducting research and supervising an average of 10 Masters and Doctoral students per annum. The Chairs are therefore strongly encouraged to attract additional funding for research and human capital development from other national and international funders and donors to supplement the SARChI grant.

4.3. Payment of Grants

The operational value of the grant for year 1 of 5 for the awarded Research Chair will be released to the host institution upon receipt of the duly signed NRF *'Conditions of Grant'* and paid when claims of expenses are submitted by the university.   Student funding will be made available to successful nominated postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Grants will thereafter be disbursed to the universities on an annual basis, for the approved funding period, subject to the appointed Chair meeting the *'Conditions of Grant'* and submitting a PR*.*

4.4. Evaluation and Impact of Research Chairs

A baseline study of Research Chairs, their institutional and intellectual environments, will be conducted with each round of new awards. These studies, together with the universities' Strategic Research Plans and the Research Chair's activity plan, will serve as the baseline to evaluate the impact on the discipline and at the institutional level.

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6. NRF Contact Persons

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