Application and Funding Guide Document

Extension Scholarships for Masters and Doctoral Students 2017

Directorate: Grants Management and Systems Administration

Date: May 2016
# List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APR</th>
<th>Annual Progress Report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Designated Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMSA</td>
<td>Grants Management and Systems Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>HICD</td>
<td>Human and Institutional Capacity Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RISA</td>
<td>Research and Innovation Support and Advancement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td>National Research Foundation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Contact Details

When making an enquiry use Extension Scholarships for Masters and Doctoral Students Call 2017 as the email subject line.

Ms Nozine Nqeketo
Professional Officer: Grant Management and Systems Administration
Telephone: (012) 481-4184
Fax: 012 349 1179
E-mail address: nozine.nqeketo@nrf.ac.za

Ms Zikhona Lose
Professional Officer: Grant Management and Systems Administration
Telephone: (012) 481 4365
Fax: 012 349 1179
E-mail address: zikhona.lose@nrf.ac.za

Application guidelines are explained in this document. Please read this document together with the call or framework document of the funding instrument that highlights the eligibility criteria and requirements.

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours from 08:00 to 16:30

Telephone: (012) 481-4202
E-mail: Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za
1. Introduction

This Manual provides an overview of the Call for Extension Scholarships for Masters and Doctoral Studies. It serves as a Funding Guide Manual for this funding instrument, its application funding guidelines and processes. The Manual should be read in conjunction with the funding instrument call or framework document that can be accessed at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. It does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

2. Values of Support

Support for completion of studies will be made based on a semester. This implies that applicants who will complete before July will receive half the value of the scholarship, whereas those who will complete in the second semester will receive the full award. For the 2017 academic year, the value of the scholarships will receive the current annual scholarship values of the NRF funding categories as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Category</th>
<th>Masters Scholarship Values for 12 months (Rand)</th>
<th>Doctoral Scholarship Values for 12 months (Rand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Bursary Scheme</td>
<td>80 000</td>
<td>110 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarce Skills Development Fund</td>
<td>80 000</td>
<td>110 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF Free-standing Scholarships</td>
<td>50 000</td>
<td>70 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant-holder linked Scholarships</td>
<td>50 000</td>
<td>70 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Application Process

The NRF issues a call for extended support for masters and doctoral scholarship applications that is published on the NRF website and is accessible online at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. Only students that are funded in 2016 will be able to apply. This call accepts only one application per applicant per year. All applications must be duly authorised and approved by the Designated Authority (DA) of the research institution that submits the application. Applications are automatically submitted to the institutional DA of the submitting institution for validation on the deadline date determined by the institution. Please enquire with your institution regarding their internal closing dates. The processing of a successful grant application takes approximately five (5) months from the time of submission until commencement of funding.
4. How to Submit Applications

Applications must be completed on the NRF Online Submission System at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za from 16 May 2016. Applicants are advised to start applying early on to prevent IT system overload nearer the closing date.
**Step 1:** This is an electronic submission system and applicants must be registered on the system in order to create and complete an application. If you previously registered on the NRF Online System ([http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za](http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za)) before February 2012, your details will have been migrated to the new NRF Online Submission System ([https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za)). If you experience problems accessing the system with your NRF Online password, click the Reset Password button to reset it. If you are not yet registered on the NRF Online Submission System, you should register to access the application form.
**Step 2:** Once you have successfully logged onto the NRF Online Submission System, you get to the Landing Page. On the landing page, click on the left menu (tab indicated with blue arrow) to create a new application by clicking on My Applications, then Create Application.
Step 3: On the create application screen, select the funding instrument for which you are applying which will open up an online application form to complete. An application can be created once only; to continue working on an application, go to My Applications - List of Applications.
Step 4: Applicants are urged to complete or update ALL screens of the CV, including the Research Profile and Research Outputs (if applicable), as this information is evaluated during the merit review process.

Step 5: All sections marked with a red asterisk are compulsory. The sections without asterisks are not, and you may enter information in these sections only if you have information to enter, such as research outputs. Completed sections will be indicated by a green tick on the main menu, while incomplete sections will be indicated by a yellow cross.
All compulsory sections will guide the applicant with error messages at the top of the screen. Follow these messages to complete each section correctly. Most screens have screen- and application-specific instructions to guide the applicant through the sections. It is important to read these instructions carefully before completing the sections.

**Step 6:** The *Academic Information* section is one of the evaluated sections in your application. The applicant must ensure that the supervisor’s email address is correct as the application will be automatically forwarded to him/her after the application is submitted. The supervisor’s report is confidential to the applicant and the comment is taken into consideration when evaluating the application (see also 5.3).
Step 7: Sections under Details of Research are all compulsory. The applicant should follow the instructions and provide a detailed description of the project; the achievements to date versus the initial project objectives; and include the research work that is still outstanding. Also include details of manuscripts under preparation or that were submitted for publication. For more details on what is required under Details of Research, please also see section on Ranking of Applications: NRF scorecard assessment below.

The information above is thoroughly assessed by external panel members who are experts in the different disciplines. In the section Reason for Non-completion of Study, the student must detail challenges that were encountered with the project that led to the non-completion of the degree.
One of the important sections under section 8 above is the **Proposed Research Plan** section which requires applicants to indicate the **start and end dates** of each category listed below. Applicants must note the importance of supplying this detail of the work plan which is assessed based on the supervisor’s comment as well as the feasibility of the timelines, the appropriateness of the research to be conducted and the details of activities planned.
**Step 8:** The attachment section provides specific instructions for uploading attachments. Click on **Add** and type in the name of the document you are uploading. If you indicated that you have a disability, you may also upload a medical certificate in support of your disability.
Step 9: 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 or Post Graduate Office and is usually at least two weeks prior to the NRF’s closing date.

Institutions are requested to screen and approve all proposals through internal institutional processes before being submitting applications to the NRF. 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 application.

Step 10: The final submit button will only appear when all compulsory sections are complete. If all the compulsory sections are complete and the final submit button does not appear, please select any section, re-save to refresh the application, and you should see the final submit button. Once you have selected final submit, the application will be routed to your hosting institution for validation and later, for consideration by the NRF.

Late applications, additional supporting documentation or information received after the closing date will not be accepted or considered.

The NRF will reject applications that are late or incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect detail, or fail to follow instructions. The application must be completed in sufficient detail to allow for a comprehensive review and evaluation process 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, if required. Failure to supply such information or documentation upon request may result in the rejection of the application.

5. Screening and Review Processes

5.1 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 as set out in this Manual, as well as the requirements for completing the online application. Applications that fail to meet the stipulated requirements will be rejected.

5.2 Overview of the Review Process
The NRF’s peer review policy requires that all applications are subjected to a review process. Applications submitted to this funding instrument will go through a panel review process.
Panel Review

Panel members are selected from the NRF database and other sources, which is updated on a continuous basis. In making the selection of the panel, the expertise and experience of individuals in application adjudication are taken into account. In assessing the application, agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard.

The Panel provides recommendations to the NRF and the final funding decision is made by the NRF taking strategic and policy objectives into consideration. In awarding grants in this funding instrument, the NRF takes into account the recommendations of the peer review panel, the objectives and targets of the funding instrument, and the available funds.

5.3 Ranking of Applications

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications, based on funding instrument criteria, in order to identify applicants that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding are evaluated according to a number of predetermined criteria. Applications are assessed and ranked on the basis of criteria as listed in the table below. Each area is weighted to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used.

NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Extension Support for Master’s and Doctoral Students Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causes of delays in project completion</td>
<td>This is an important section which details the initial proposed project objectives and challenges encountered that led to the delays in project completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress to date</td>
<td>This section refers to a detailed and comprehensive account of progress achieved to date. It also looks at the originality and contribution to new knowledge, interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary aspects; and utilisation of existing knowledge and methodologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work plan to complete the degree</td>
<td>Research objectives to match aims of study – reviewers will assess whether the research objectives are clearly stated and 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. 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. Students to provide a thorough work plan towards completion of study. They should also give feasible timelines and methodical project activities.</td>
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</tbody>
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6. Application Feedback and Disputes

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the recommended funding decision has been approved by the NRF. The NRF will publish a list of successful applications emanating from the call for applications on the NRF website, www.nrf.ac.za; thereafter, successful applicants will receive a letter of award. The application status on the NRF Submissions system will not indicate whether the application has been supported for funding. This funding instrument does not provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants; if your name does not appear on the list you have not been supported.

Should an unsuccessful applicant require feedback, they are requested to follow the process and query via their institutional office. The NRF does not provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants due to the high volume of applications received across all NRF funding instruments.

Unsuccessful applicants that wish to appeal the funding decision taken must follow the appropriate Appeals Process of the NRF. Appeals will only be considered for this funding instrument within a five (5) month period after the official date of publishing of the results on the NRF website.

7. Awardee Responsibilities

7.1 Reporting

At the end of the funding period, recipients of the scholarships shall submit a final report indicating the outputs. In addition, each student will be required to provide proof of submission of the thesis and, where applicable, proof of submission of a manuscript to an accredited journal.
7.2 Managing changes during the project life cycle
Changes may occur during the project life cycle due to unforeseen and 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.

7.2.1 Change Requests

7.2.1.1 Prior Approval Requests
Applicants must submit all change requests in writing to the NRF 30 days before the proposed changes occur. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office / Post graduate funding Office for approval prior to the change.

7.2.1.2 Changes in project scope, supervisor or institution
Although changes in the research project scope are not anticipated in this extension support call, other changes may occur in the case of a supervisor. The request for any changes must have institutional DA endorsement and must be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office.

8. Scientific Compliance

8.1 Methodology
The student takes scientific responsibility for the research to be undertaken, including its objectives and the methodology outlined in the project proposal. The student 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.

8.2 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, 1 which will override this condition of grant.

8.3 Ethics
The student 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.
List of References