STUDY SUPPORT FOR COMPLETING PART-TIME DOCTORAL STUDENTS

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Business Unit: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development
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1. **Background and rationale**

1.1. **Purpose of this framework document**

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation of the part time doctoral study support programme. The programme is funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), through a contractual agreement with the National Research Foundation (NRF) for the management of funding for human capital development in South Africa.

1.2. **Background**

Studies on the *state of postgraduate studies* in South Africa have shown that more and more doctoral students are remaining or 'piling up' in the system, and fewer graduates are produced, relative to the number of new enrolments. Consequently, supervisors of Master's and Doctoral students at South African universities face an increasing burden as the average number of students to supervise continues to increase. In 2005, it was estimated that the "average" supervisor would have to supervise seven (7) Master's and Doctoral students. The situation is worse in the social sciences, in which a single supervisor was estimated to have nearly 12 students (CHE, 2007). This has direct implications for the completion rates of doctoral degrees in South Africa. On average, Doctoral students take 4.5 years to complete their studies. However, the mature students between the age groups 40-49; and 50 – 59 years of age take up to six years to complete doctoral studies. These students are faced with work pressures, financial obligations and have limited access to scholarship/sabbatical opportunities. The completion rates can be improved should the large proportions of part-time students be afforded dedicated time away from work pressures to complete their dissertations.

The funding programme aims to provide funding to part-time registered doctoral students enabling completion of the doctoral studies and thereby increase graduation and throughput rates. Currently, the NRF mostly provides funding for full-time studies. This is the first time that the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has committed funding to part-time registered doctoral students to complete their studies.
2. Objectives

The objectives of the part-time study support programme are to:

- Provide an opportunity for completing\(^1\) doctoral students to submit their dissertations for examination;
- Ease the burden of supervision by facilitating the completion of doctoral degrees;
- Effect transformation in the knowledge workforce in South Africa, with respect to race, gender and persons with disabilities; and
- Develop a cohort of potential candidates for effective industry-academia partnerships that will be composed of mentors and role models for the next generation of researchers.

3. Eligibility

Priority will be given to those that are in the process of finalising their thesis for examination and/or preparing a submission of a manuscript to an accredited journal. Students who are academically deserving but financially needy will be given priority. It is planned that about fifty (50) awards will be made for the 2015 academic year.

In selecting applicants for consideration for funding, the following criteria will apply:

- Applicants must either be South African citizens or in possession of South African permanent residency;
- An applicant may not concurrently hold this support with another NRF scholarships or scholarships from any other South African government source; and
- An applicant must currently be registered for a doctoral degree and be in the final year of the research activities.

\(^1\) Completing refers to students who need not more than one year to submission of their theses for examination.
4. **Application process**

- Applicants can apply for the Study Support for Completing Part-Time Doctoral Students by accessing the link: [https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/)

- Support will be provided to students currently pursuing research based doctoral degrees in all areas of Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematical Sciences (STEM) as well as the Social Science and Humanities (SSH) at public universities;

- Applications must be endorsed by the university authority for research at which the candidate is registered and upload a letter from the Human Resource Manager at the employing organisation.

5. **Value of part-time bursary support**

Support for completion of studies will be made on a *pro rata* basis not exceeding twelve months. For the 2015 academic year, the value of the bursaries will be a maximum of R10 000 per month for ten months or R100 000 per annum. Candidates will be expected to submit a budget indicating how the funds will be utilised.

6. **Institutional Accountability**

Applications must include a letter of support from the supervisor of the research as well as the Human Resources (HR) Manager of the employing organisation. The letter from the employing organisation must:

- confirm the employment status of the candidate; and

- commit to allow the candidate time away from work in order to finalise and submit the thesis.
7. Reporting

At the end of the funding period, a final report must be submitted 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.

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