Framework Document

Extension Scholarships for Masters and Doctoral Students

Directorate: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development
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1. **Background and Rationale**

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation of the Extension Support for Masters and Doctoral students. The funding instrument is funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), through a contractual agreement (DST/CON 0118/2012) with the National Research Foundation (NRF) for the management of funding for human capital development in South Africa.

The NRF provides Masters and Doctoral scholarships to candidates that meet the application requirements through a number of freestanding funding instruments such as the Innovation Bursary Scheme (IBS), Scarce Skills Development Fund (SSDF) and NRF scholarships. In addition, provision for masters and doctoral studies is made through grant holder-linked bursaries.

A large number of students are unable to complete their degrees within the two- or three year time period stipulated for Masters and Doctoral degrees respectively. The extension bursary support is intended to increase graduation and throughput rates for full-time masters and doctoral students in South Africa, by providing additional funding for six (6) or 12 months.

To accelerate the throughput of masters and doctoral graduates, a six (6) or 12 months extension bursary is offered to existing NRF supported masters and doctoral bursary holders pursuing postgraduate studies in South Africa. Priority will be given to academically deserving but financially needy students, and those that are in the process of finalizing their dissertation or thesis for examination and/or submitting a manuscript to an accredited journal.
2. Objectives

The objectives of the Extension Bursary Support Funding Instrument are to:

- Accelerate the graduation throughput rates of full-time masters and doctoral students that are NRF bursars or scholarship holders in South Africa; and
- To increase research outputs from Masters and Doctoral students at public higher education institutions.

3. Eligibility

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

- The student must have been an NRF bursary or scholarship recipient, for the current degree *e.g.* recipient of an Innovation Bursary Scheme, Scarce Skills Development Fund, NRF freestanding or grant-holder linked bursary or scholarship.
- Applicants must be a full-time student in their second year Masters or third year Doctoral studies in South Africa at the time of application.
- Only students pursuing full-time Masters or Doctoral studies in South Africa are eligible to apply.

4. Selection Criteria

The following will be considered in screening and evaluating all applications in a competitive merit review process:

- A completed supervisor’s report that includes the following:
  - intended thesis submission date;
  - envisaged graduating date;
  - reasons for extension;
  - plans to ensure that the student will finish in six (6) or 12 months; and
  - Whether funding is required for six (6) or 12 months.
- A completed student work plan for the six (6) or 12 months period detailing the following:
  - Start and end dates for the six (6) or 12 months’ work plan;
  - Proposed date for submission of the Masters or Doctoral Dissertation for examination;
  - Proposed graduation date;
5. Application Process

Applications for funding in 2017 must be submitted through the Online application system to the NRF by accessing the link: https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/. The call for applications will be open from May 2016 to June 2016. Further instructions on the application process will be made available in the DST-NRF – Extension Support for Masters and Doctoral 2017 Application and Funding Guide.

6. Approval Process

The applications submitted to the NRF will undergo a technical review to ensure accountability and appropriate utilisation of funds to be awarded. The proposal will be approved for funding for either a six (6) or 12 months period.

7. Equity and Redress

In line with the national imperative of equity and redress, the funding instrument prioritises support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups viz. black, female and persons with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the NRF merit review and selection criteria are supported. The set equity targets are 80% blacks, 55% women and 4% students with disabilities.

With respect to citizenship of successful applicants, the awards will be allocated in line with the following percentages:

- 87% to South African and permanent residents;
- 5% to students from the South African Development Community (SADC) region;
- 4% to students from the rest of Africa; and
- 4% to students from non-African countries
8. Value of Support

Support for completion of studies will be made for a six (6) or 12 month period. For the 2017 academic year, the value of the bursaries will be the same as the current annual bursary and scholarship values of the NRF funding categories as indicated in the table that follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Category</th>
<th>Masters Bursary values for 12 months</th>
<th>Doctoral Bursary values for 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Bursary Scheme</td>
<td>R 80 000</td>
<td>R 110 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarce Skills Development Fund</td>
<td>R 80 000</td>
<td>R 110 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF Free-standing Bursaries</td>
<td>R 50 000</td>
<td>R 70 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant-holder linked Bursaries</td>
<td>R 50 000</td>
<td>R 70 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Funding Principle

The extension support for completion of Masters and Doctoral degrees is aimed at increasing the throughput rates of masters and doctoral students at public higher education institutions. Consideration will be given to ensuring the need to strengthen research capacity in priority skills and knowledge fields and to accelerate the demographic transformation of the next generation of researchers. Attempt will be made to allocate funding in order to meet the target of 80% black students, 55% female students and 4% students with disability. Allocation of funding will be governed by the annual budget allocation.
10. Reporting

At the end of the funding period, grant recipients shall submit a final report indicating the outputs. In addition, each student will be required to provide proof of submission of the dissertation and, where applicable, proof of submission of a manuscript(s) to an accredited journal.

11. Financial Control

These awards will be managed in terms of standard NRF financial policies and procedures. The payment of the grant by the NRF to successful applicants will be administered by the Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate to the relevant institutions’ cost centres. The institution will in turn administer the funds on behalf of the successful grant holder to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF.

Scholarships not taken up by end June of the grant award year will be cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.