Funding Instrument:  
Sabbatical Grants to Complete  
Doctoral Degrees

Functional Domain:  
Grants Management and Systems  
Administration

Document:  
2015 Funding Guide

Date:  
March 2015
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**Abbreviations**

CoG  Conditions of Grant  
CV   Curriculum Vitae  
DA   Designated Authority  
DST  Department of Science and Technology  
DVC  Deputy Vice Chancellor  
HICD Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development  
NRF  National Research Foundation  
WBS  Work Breakdown Structure
1. Introduction

In 2010, the National Research Foundation (NRF) introduced the ‘Improving Academic Qualifications of Academic Staff and Researchers’ grant to accelerate the completion of doctoral degrees in order to increase the research and postgraduate supervisory capacity at universities and research institutions. With the allocation of additional funding by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), this intervention is now being extended to a three-year programme spanning the 2013 to 2015 academic years. This Call for Sabbatical Grants to Complete Doctoral Degrees therefore constitutes the third year (second cycle) of the above-mentioned funding instrument.

A once-off award will be made to full-time academic and research staff in order to free them of their teaching and administrative duties for a 6- or 12-month sabbatical leave period. The objectives of this intervention are to –

- Accelerate the doctoral level training of full-time academic staff at public universities and research institutions;
- Improve the academic qualifications of employed academics to enhance research and supervisory capacity; and
- Effect a rapid transformation in the demographic composition of the emerging researcher community with respect to gender, race and persons with disabilities.

This Call has a two-pronged approach:

- A Call to invite the DVC: Research (or equivalent) of public universities and research institutions to nominate eligible individuals for participation in this grant; and
- A Call for the nominated individuals to apply for funding within this Funding Instrument.

This Funding Guide is intended to inform nominees of the operational procedures for applying for support in this funding instrument. It covers issues around eligibility criteria, application, review procedures, funding rules and reporting requirements.
It should be read in conjunction with the *Sabbatical Grants to Complete Doctoral Degrees Framework* that forms part of the Call documentation. These can be accessed at [http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php](http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php) when the opening of the Call is announced.

Nominated candidates, who are in the process of completing the research for their doctoral studies and/or preparing a dissertation for examination, must submit applications on the NRF Online Submission System, at [https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za).

### 2. Eligibility

To qualify for support, applicants must comply with the following eligibility criteria. Applicants must be:

- Full-time academic employees of public universities or research institutions in South Africa;
- Engaged in research in any discipline and registered in doctoral programmes in public universities in South Africa only;
- Employed in a permanent position or on a full-time fixed-term appointment/contract for at least one year after the completion of the sabbatical leave;
- South African citizens;
- Expected to have no teaching related duties assigned to them during the six- or twelve month period of the sabbatical leave; and
- Nominated by the DVC: Research (or equivalent) in the Nominations Call for this Funding Instrument.

### 3. Institutional Responsibility

For this Call, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC): Research (or equivalent) must:

- Nominate 80% black and 60% female candidates;

The institutional Designated Authority (DA) must:
• Ensure that the online applications are completed in full with all the necessary supporting documentation attached; and

• Validate and authorise all applications submitted on the NRF Online Submission System.

• Submit a letter to the NRF confirming the date of commencement of the sabbatical leave, to be provided within one month, from the date of commencement.

4. **Nomination and Application Calls**

4.1 **Nomination Requirements**

Call for Nominations will open on **23 March 2015 and close on 22 April 2015**. It is imperative that the Office of the DVC: Research (or equivalent) completes the requested information on the nomination form through the NRF online Submission System ([https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za)) and submits to the NRF by latest 22 April 2015, through the institutional research office.

Only nominated candidates will be eligible to apply.

4.2 **Application Requirements**

The Call for Applications will open on **28 April 2015 and close on 26 June 2015**. All nominated candidates must apply through the NRF Online Submission System ([https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za)) and ensure that the following sections of the application are completed or updated:

- Registration Details.

- Applicant’s details, contact information and academic/personal background. (All Sections from “Contact Details” to “Articles in Non-refereed/Non-peer Reviewed Journals”).

- Academic Information.
• Details of Research.

• Disability status if applicable.

• Research Project Plan.

• Attachments (compulsory)
  
  o Proof of duration of full-time fixed-term appointment/contract of employment (if applicable).

The following applications will not be considered:

• Incomplete applications.

• Applications from candidates who have not been nominated by the DVC (Research) of their institution.

• Incomplete Curriculum Vitae on the NRF Online Submission System.

• Applications that do not include a Supervisor’s Recommendation.

• Applications from candidates who are registered in a non-South African public university.

5. Funding

5.1 Funding Models

Funding will be provided for the financing of the sabbatical on the following models:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding period</th>
<th>Maximum NRF contribution</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-month sabbatical</td>
<td>R100 000</td>
<td>80% for lecturer replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-month sabbatical</td>
<td>R200 000</td>
<td>20% for thesis related costs (running expenses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The sabbatical leave may commence at any time within 2016 starting from the day of receipt of notification of a successful application outcome.
• All sabbatical leave must commence no later than 01 October 2016.
• Submission of dissertation/thesis should not be made later than three months from the completion of the sabbatical leave.

Funding will be allocated to the successful candidates according to the demographic objectives of the funding instrument, i.e. 80% black and 60% female applicants.

5.2 Funding principle: Institution

There are no limits to the number of nominations an institution may submit, bearing in mind the NRF strategic objective of transforming the academic cohort with respect to the designated groups.

All awards will be based on the merit of individual applications.

5.3 Funding support for sabbatical awards

Awards may be utilised for the following line items and reported accordingly as per requirements in Section 6.3.

- 80% of the grant towards lecturer replacement (detailed cost breakdown must be supplied in the application); and
- 20% of the grant towards thesis’ related expenses (running expenses) such as proofreading, binding, copying, editing etc. (detailed cost breakdown must be supplied in the application).

The utilisation of funds will be audited according to standard NRF auditing procedures.

5.4 Institutional commitment

Whilst the institutions are not obligated to commit matching funding, they are required to:

• Allow the successful nominee time off equivalent to the duration of the grant; and
• Appoint suitable replacements in order to facilitate the uninterrupted work at the institution.

5.5 **Multiple awards**

Nominees that are selected as recipients of this once-off award may concurrently hold other grants from the NRF for the duration of this award according to the *Multiple Grants Eligibility Overview* as advertised on the NRF website.

5.6 **Payment of grant**

Awards will be released to the organisation where the awardee is employed on receipt of the acceptance of Conditions of Grant (CoG), duly signed by the awardee and the DA and uploaded onto the NRF electronic systems. Payment will be made only within the rules of the NRF grant claim process.

6. **Evaluation Process**

All applications for funding will be subjected to the following two-phased review process:

1. Internal screening; and
2. Panel peer-review of qualifying proposals.

6.1 **Internal Screening**

Screening of applications will take place at two levels, namely the submitting institution and the NRF. Firstly at the institutional level where institutions are required to ensure that the application meets the requirements as specified in the Call documents and, that it carries the institutional endorsement. Secondly, an NRF internal screening will be undertaken when the applications are received by the NRF to ensure that all the required information has been submitted and, that the application meets the eligibility criteria. Failure to meet all requirements will result in the application being precluded from further review.
6.2 Panel peer-review

The NRF will constitute local Review Panels to evaluate the applications against the set criteria shown in the table below and make recommendations to the NRF on the merit of the applications for funding.

6.2.1 Evaluation criteria

**Scorecard for the evaluation of applications**

**Section 1: Work plan for completion of doctoral studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Plan</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/poor project plan: contains insufficient/no information regarding the activities and resources to carry out the research.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete project plan: contains very limited information of activities to carry out the research; no Work Breakdown Structure, no project organization, no project budget, and unrealistic timeframes and/or activities.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete project plan: include all the activities and resources required to conduct the research. The research project is considered to be achievable/feasible based on the information at hand.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good project plan: strong proposal that contains a well-crafted project plan: availability of resources, including time, and appropriate alignment of human/financial resources towards the project outcomes. The research project is highly achievable/feasible based on the information at hand.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent project plan: contains outstanding project organisation, project schedule (Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)) with the work divided into manageable activities and linked to specific time-bound outcomes; project budget which lists the activities, costs and motivation towards efficient use of resources. Acknowledgements of any limitations. The research project and corresponding outputs should be achieved based on the information at hand.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section 2: Research outputs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Outputs</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No indication of outputs to be produced.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envisaged outputs listed but no indication of logical timeframes/unrealistic outputs.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **Award Process**

Two types of awards will be provided based on the length of the sabbatical, namely:

- Six-month award at a maximum value of R100 000; and
- Twelve-month award at a maximum value of R200 000.

In all cases funding will be provided to a single grantee to be used purely and exclusively for the financing of a sabbatical allowing for the completion of a doctoral degree. The awards will be made in two different funding categories, namely Operational Costs and Lecturer Replacement.

Successful candidates will be required to sign the Conditions of Grant document, which outlines the terms and conditions of the award. An important condition to note is that applicants are required to spend the funding in the period for which the grant is intended. Any carry-forward of unspent funds to the next grant year will only be permitted under extenuating circumstances, e.g. ill health, and must be motivated through the electronic Carry Forward process.

8. **Reporting**

With the view to continuously monitor project performance the grantees are required to submit project reports. The NRF will use these reports to assess project performance
against timeframes and deliverables as indicated in the project work plans. The purpose of reporting is to detect possible issues and to implement corrective measures timeously.

Two reporting periods are envisioned for this initiative so as to comply both with standard NRF reporting practices and the specific reporting expectation provided by the Department of Science and Technology (DST):

- A report on expenditure, to be submitted to the NRF within **one month** from the end of the funding/sabbatical period *via* the Research Office, detailing the exact use that was made of grant monies provided as well as such funds as remain unspent; and

- Within **one year from completion of sabbatical leave**, proof must be provided to the NRF, *via* the Research Office, of the:
  
  - Submission of a doctoral thesis or dissertation to university authorities for examination; and/or
  
  - Proof of the award of the Doctoral Degree; AND
  
  - Publication of at least one article in an accredited academic or scientific journal.

**NB:** If the stipulated conditions above are not met, the NRF reserves the right to request the awarded funding to be returned to the NRF.

### 7. General

#### 7.1 NRF-online Registration

Applicants must register on the NRF Online Submission System ([https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za)), and complete or update the CV section before completing the application.
7.2 **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 Capital Act*, which will override this condition of grant.

7.3 **Data Storage, Usage and Dissemination**

Should the outputs of the research project not be protected, conscious plans need to be made to make the data available to the larger research community through existing databases, some of which can be specific to the research field and other generic fields.

7.4 **Ethics**

An awardee is required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards when conducting research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It remains the responsibility of the awardee leader to comply with all relevant regulations in this respect, including those laid down by the institution concerned. If the nominee is successful, the ethical clearance certificate, if applicable, has to be submitted to the NRF before any funds can be released.
NRF contacts for queries

For any queries related to the Call, process and management and administration of awards you may contact:

**Director:** GMSA  
Ms Anthipi Pouris  
Telephone: (012) 481 4240  
e-mail address: anthipi@nrf.ac.za

**Liaison Officer & Project team member:** GMSA  
Ms Gita Maharaj  
Telephone: (012) 481 4175  
e-mail address: gita@nrf.ac.za

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours on

Tel: (012) 481 4034  
e-mail address: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za