



NRF Postgraduate Student Funding Policy

Statement of Expectations for NRF Postgraduate Student Funding

Introduction

The National Research Foundation (NRF) allocates postgraduate funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success and throughput, with transformation as the core objective.

The NRF maximises return on funding investment, strives to achieve a fully representative and transformed South African research workforce and reduces the age of completion of doctoral degrees, whilst improving success rates, and facilitating high retention of exceptional postgraduate talent in the academic and research fields.

The NRF support postgraduate training through a number of interventions and the expectations are set out below for the Universities, Students and NRF.

Expectation of Universities

1. For postgraduate student training and development, universities are expected to demonstrate that they:
 - a. Underpin all of their work with common values of rigour and integrity;
 - b. Conform to all ethical, legal and professional obligations incumbent on their work;
 - c. Nurture a research environment that supports research of the highest standards of rigour and integrity;
 - d. Use transparent, robust and fair processes to handle allegations of misconduct;
 - e. Continue to monitor, and where necessary improve, the suitability and appropriateness of the mechanisms in place to provide assurances over the integrity of research;
 - f. Ensure that all the designated **postgraduate supervisors** have the necessary training, capabilities and capacity to train and supervisor postgraduate students; and
 - g. The university must assign a mark for the major subjects in the final year of all undergraduate degrees, major subject(s) for the honours degree and an overall mark for all masters degrees as students must meet the academic pass mark requirement to be eligible for an NRF postgraduate scholarship.

Administrative support for postgraduate students

2. The NRF further expects universities to create equality of opportunity for students with disabilities and the removal of all barriers to enable their inclusion and integration into postgraduate programmes.
3. Universities will be expected to have inclusive policies aligned to the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System (2018). Additionally, institutional policy on disability must cover three critical areas of access: the enabling environment, coordination and cooperation.
4. Universities will be expected to review each postgraduate application using a standard scorecard provided by the NRF before forwarding nominated applications to the NRF.
5. Institutional reviewers are expected to review the applications at all three levels of study, applying all the scorecard review criteria provided by the NRF.
6. Institutional reviewers are expected to note the NRF's emphasis on scientific merit and originality of the study for masters and doctoral applications respectively as well as potential impact of the outputs at both levels of study when reviewing applications.
7. The Research Office or Postgraduate Office must submit confirmation of the review process signed by the Deans of Faculties. Only applications recommended for funding, based on the merit review of applications by the university, must be submitted to the NRF for consideration for funding.
8. All universities will be expected to sign a Condition of the Grant (CoG) at the commencement of funding at each level of study.
9. The NRF expects that postgraduate students receiving NRF scholarships must be prioritised for accommodation at University residences, especially at the honours level.
10. Universities are expected to accommodate persons with disabilities in university accommodation or university approved accommodation with no barriers to access.
11. The NRF expects that postgraduate students receiving NRF scholarships that do not have accommodation at University residences, will be assisted to secure off-site university accredited accommodation.

12. The living allowance and accommodation allowance in the event that an NRF bursar does not reside in University residence, must be paid out to the student on a monthly basis.
13. Where a university provides a fee waiver, at the masters or doctoral levels, the funds allocated for the fees will not accrue to the student but will be made available as a research grant to cover running expenses of the postgraduate research project. Running expenses are categorised as small equipment, materials and supplies, data collection, site visits and technical assistance for specialised skills.
14. In order for the students not to lose their continued funding at total cost of study, higher education institutions must ensure that the academic results are available before the institutional deadlines for registration for the next higher degree.
15. The universities should undertake open, merit-based and transparent recruitment of postgraduate students.

Enabling environment for postgraduate training

16. The universities are expected to provide an environment where postgraduate students have the opportunity to widen their horizons as part of their training. Experiences outside their own university, for example with other academic collaborators, in non-academic environments or overseas are encouraged where it fits with the individual and scope of the project. These should be well planned to ensure that the postgraduate student gains maximum benefit.
17. Universities are required to ensure access to managed social support ensuring availability of Healthcare on campus and access to psychologists and counsellors on campus.
18. The universities shall ensure that all students enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be submitted to the NRF together with the signed Conditions of Grant.
19. In the case of honours students, the MoU will be firstly agreed and signed by the student and the University Head of Department clarifying expectations, with a final signature from the Dean of Faculty.
20. In the case of masters and doctoral students the MoU will be agreed and signed between the supervisor(s) and the postgraduate student, clarifying expectations and preferences in managing the Research project, with a final signature from the Dean of Faculty.

Training of postgraduate students

21. The universities should implement a training strategy which is in line with the approved research project.
22. The emphasis should be on enhancing the research excellence and quality of postgraduate training by developing the students thinking and research capabilities, academic capabilities and life skills.

Quality assurance

23. The universities should provide career advice (both prior to embarking on a postgraduate studies and ongoing) to enable students to choose the most appropriate type of postgraduate study and have the confidence and skills to explore the impact they may have in a wide range of career options.

Code of Ethics for Research

24. It is the responsibility of the supervisor, in conjunction with the University, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside the South Africa comply with the laws or regulations of South Africa and/or of the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include appropriate human subject, animal welfare, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate.
25. Universities are expected to offer all Postgraduate students supported by NRF to conduct research, appropriate training on code of ethics for Research.

Supervision of students

26. The HEIs are expected to provide excellent standards of supervision, management and mentoring. Supervisors should receive the support and training that they individually need to provide the highest-quality supervisory support to their postgraduate students, and be aware of their responsibilities to treat all postgraduate students in a fair, open and non-discriminatory manner.
27. Supervisors of masters and doctoral students shall ensure that there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between him/herself and the postgraduate student, agreed and signed by the student, supervisor(s) and the Dean of Faculty, clarifying expectations and preferences in managing the Research project.

28. Supervisor should provide institutional commitment to the necessary running expenses for the research project as well as the appropriate research infrastructure during the postgraduate studies.
29. Supervisor should provide postgraduate student with training in the principles of good research conduct in their discipline, and understanding how to comply with relevant ethical, legal and professional frameworks as part of their training.
30. Supervisor should provide postgraduate student with in-depth advanced training, as well as developing a broad understanding of their subject area. They should also provide an understanding of how their research fits into the broader “research and innovation system”.
31. Supervisor should provide postgraduate student with training in experimental design and statistics appropriate to their disciplines and in the importance of ensuring research results are robust and reproducible.
32. Supervisors are expected to have regular project review meetings with postgraduate students to monitor progress and to identify and address potential challenges at an early stage.
33. Supervisors should recognise postgraduate studies as a wider training opportunities and encourage and support students in developing their careers. Supervisors are therefore expected to have personal development review meetings with students at regular intervals. Supervisors are expected to ensure that students receive managed academic support, life skills training and wrap-around support for holistic personal development.
34. Supervisors must ensure that students submit Bi-annual Progress Reports to ensure continued funding for their postgraduate studies.
35. Supervisors must ensure that the student undertakes at least 80 hours of Academic Service Work per annum in the form of structured, university determined academic support activities.

Research Collaborators

36. The collaborating partners should maximise the quality of the training experience for the student by recognising the broader training and development opportunities which are available through working in academic and non-academic environments.

37. The NRF expects the University and collaborating organisation to have an agreement in place before the project begins, which recognises the student's contribution, to make sure that the Intellectual Property arising from the research/training is managed effectively.

Expectation of the Students

38. Students are expected to apply for the funding on time, submitting all the required documents.
39. Students are expected to inform the NRF about any other funding that they may be awarded. Failure to do so will be regarded as fraud and will result in the termination of funding and return of any funding fraudulently received.
40. Students are expected to take full responsibility of their own learning and development and the successful and timely completion of their qualification.
41. All NRF funded students must have a valid transactional bank account into which monthly stipends will be paid by the university.
42. All NRF funded students will be expected to sign a Condition of the Grant (CoG) at the commencement of funding at each level of study.
43. Honours students should ensure that they submit to the NRF, a MoU agreed and signed by the student and the Head of Department clarifying expectations, and signed by the Dean of Faculty
44. Masters and doctoral students should ensure that they submit to the NRF a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between him/herself agreed and signed by the student, supervisor(s) and the Dean of Faculty clarifying expectations and preferences in managing the Research project.
45. The Student-Supervisor MoU must include frequency for submitting written reports; managed academic support; life skills training and wrap-around support for holistic personal development. In addition the MoU must include at least 80 hours of Academic Service Work per annum in the form of structured, university determined academic support activities.

46. Students should be actively involved in managing and directing their research project and training, taking advice from their supervisor.
47. Students are expected to have regular project review and personal development meetings with their supervisor(s) to monitor progress and to identify and address potential challenges at an early stage.
48. Students are expected to submit Bi-annual written progress reports endorsed by their supervisor at the end of each semester.
49. Where students get the opportunity to work in a non-academic environment, they should maximise the opportunity by seeking to understand the role of research within the organisation and the wider context.
50. Students are expected to participate in training and networking opportunities provided by the University.
51. Students should complete all information/reporting requests from the NRF and ensure contact details are maintained.
52. Students should be familiar with the funders (e.g. NRF) and their strategic objectives. NRF support should be acknowledged on any publications or any other form of dissemination arising from their postgraduate studies.
53. Students are expected to undertake at least 80 hours of Academic Service Work per annum in the form of structured, university determined academic support activities. University determined academic support activities may include tutoring/mentoring of other students; volunteering for orientation of new students and on career days; or science engagement activities. Academic support activities must be included in the student-supervisor MoU and reported on in the student Bi-annual Reports.

Expectation of the NRF

54. Provide visible information on the scholarship application process on our website and other avenues and keep this information updated. This included making explicit the criteria for eligible students.
55. NRF will receive and process applications via NRF online system.

56. Provide the necessary funding opportunities to qualifying postgraduate students.
57. Harmonise terms, conditions and guidance around postgraduate training, where practical.
58. Discuss and evaluate recruitment strategy and processes, and training of postgraduate approaches at universities on visits and through formal support mechanisms, as required.
59. Reserves the right not to fund a student nominated by the University.

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