



**RISA**

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## COMMUNIQUÉ

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION – NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (DSI-NRF) POSTGRADUATE FUNDING POLICY

#### Eligibility Requirements for NRF Postgraduate Funding Accommodation Allowance

To address the challenges of low progression rates from Honours, Master's and Doctoral studies and longer times to completion, especially among Black and female postgraduate students, the NRF implemented the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy starting from the 2021 academic year. This policy is aimed at enhancing equity relating to postgraduate student access, success and throughput, through appropriate levels of funding and is applicable to all NRF funding for postgraduate studies.

Postgraduate students will be funded either at Full Cost of Study (FCS) or Partial Cost of Study (PCS) under the new policy. To ensure equity of access to postgraduate studies, financially needy students, i.e. those whose combined household income is R350 000 per annum or less, and students with disabilities, will be funded at FCS. Students who excel in their studies and achieve a distinction or first-class pass will also be eligible for funding at FCS. International students as well as other South African citizens and permanent residents who are not eligible to be funded at FCS will be eligible for PCS funding. Applicable allowances for FCS and for PCS are aligned to the *Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Bursary Scheme for Students at Public Universities (2020)*.

Implementation of the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy commenced with the first Call for Applications in April 2020 and the first cohort of students being funded for studies in the 2021 academic year. The NRF has received feedback from universities and students relating to implementation challenges regarding the NRF requirement for students to occupy university-accredited private accommodation in order to access the accommodation allowance. The *Application and Funding Framework for NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for the 2021 Academic Year* states the following:

*“Accommodation fees will be capped and paid as per invoice. Limited to maximum cost of the equivalent university-owned on-campus accommodation at a particular institution. Students accommodated in private accredited accommodation must also provide proof of lease agreement.”*

The NRF has taken note of the challenges relating to the requirement for universities to accredit all private rental accommodation occupied by postgraduate students and has therefore taken the decision to rescind the requirement for 'accredited accommodation' and to amend the requirements as follows:

- i. To access the accommodation allowance for private rental accommodation, students must submit a valid lease agreement for the private rental accommodation.
- ii. To align with the DHET guidelines, students that are deemed to be living at home will not be eligible for the accommodation allowance.
- iii. If the property is owned/mortgaged by the student and/or their parents/guardians, the student will be deemed to be living at home and will therefore not be eligible for the accommodation allowance. This includes properties held in family trusts where the student and/or their parents/guardians are beneficiaries of the trust.

The NRF has also taken note of the request to provide a transport/living allowance for students receiving PCS funding and who are unable to access the accommodation allowance. This is under consideration and any changes made will be effective from the 2022 academic year for all new and continuing students funded under this policy. Information regarding this will be available in the *Application and Funding Framework for NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for the 2022 Academic Year*, to be published in April 2021.

We extend our appreciation to all institutions for implementing the necessary systems and processes to ensure the successful implementation of the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy.

### **Contact persons for enquiries**

For enquiries, applicants are encouraged to contact the Research or Postgraduate Offices at their respective universities. Should there still be a need to contact the NRF, below are the NRF contact persons and details:

For enquiries related to NRF Postgraduate Funding Grants Management, you may contact Ms Melissa Govender on [melissa.govender@nrf.ac.za](mailto:melissa.govender@nrf.ac.za) and 012 481 4311.

For enquiries related to the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy, you may contact Ms Busisiwe Sibiyi on [busisiwe.sibiya@nrf.ac.za](mailto:busisiwe.sibiya@nrf.ac.za) and 012 481 4166.

**25 March 2021**

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