



**DSTI-NRF Research Development Grants for  
“*New Generation of Academics Programme  
(nGAP)*” Scholars**

**Framework Document**

**Next Generation and Emerging Researchers**

**February 2026**

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## 1. Introduction

In 2015, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) launched the “*Staffing South Africa’s Universities Framework (SSAUF)*” which presented a “*comprehensive, transformative approach to developing future generations of academics and building staff capacity.*” The SSAUF focussed on both research and teaching development to ensure that academics who are supported through programmes in the framework acquire training and mentoring over the full spectrum of academic roles.

The SSAUF consists of three core programmes linked to the academic development pathway, and two cross-cutting support programme, which are the:

- *Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP)* aimed at senior undergraduate or Honours students that demonstrate academic ability at junior levels for active recruitment and development;
- *New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP)* for the recruitment of new academics against carefully designed and balanced equity considerations and in disciplinary areas of greatest need. The nGAP scholars comprise of masters and doctoral candidates and postdoctoral emerging researchers appointed against new academic positions to be created;
- *Existing Academics Capacity Enhancement Programme (EACEP)* to support the development of academics currently employed in the sector through *inter alia* funding to complete their doctoral studies or interventions that address specific gaps with respect to teaching development, research development, social engagement and academic leadership;
- *Supplementary Staff Employment Programme (SSEP)* cuts across the core programmes to enable universities to address specific skills gaps by recruiting new staff members with the requisite skills over a fixed period of time, and to support the implementation of other SSAUF programmes underway at each university; and
- *Staffing South Africa’s Universities Development Programme (SSAU-DP)* also has a cross-cutting function and supports teaching and research development needs within each programme.

This framework document focuses on complementary support, from the DHET and the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) - National Research Foundation (NRF), for emerging researchers appointed as nGAP scholars. The 2018/19 financial year marked the mid-point of the first cohort of nGAP scholars appointed in 2015/16, and in 2020

the DHET commissioned a mid-term review of the implementation of the nGAP. From inception to the mid-term review, a total of 573 nGAP posts had been approved by the DHET across 26 South African public universities and approximately 400 permanent positions had been filled<sup>1</sup>.

The nGAP is a six-year programme split into a three-year development phase followed by a second three-year induction or early career phase. During the initial three-year development phase, the nGAP scholar is expected to benefit from substantial research development and teaching development opportunities, and to complete or make substantial progress towards a masters or doctoral degree, or undertake postdoctoral training as appropriate. During this period, the nGAP scholar should receive only a 20% teaching workload allocation. In the latter three years, the teaching workload is expected to increase, reaching a full teaching load by the sixth year. Table 1 below illustrates six key aspects of the nGAP.

**Table 1. The New Generation of Academics Programme<sup>2</sup>**

Developmental Aspect	Stage 1 Development programme			Stage 2 Induction and early career development		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Employment</b>	✓ [reduced work load <sup>1</sup> 20%]	✓ [reduced work load 20%]	✓ [reduced work load 20%]	✓ [increasing work load 50%]	✓ [full work load]	✓ [full work load]
<b>Doctoral/ Post-Doctoral* study</b>	✓	✓	✓	PhD possibly still completing		
<b>Mentoring</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Participation in development activities as part of the SSAU-DP</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Research study costs</b>	Contributions towards the lecturer's research study costs.					

<sup>1</sup> Mid-term review of the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP): An analysis of Annual Reports 2016-2018

<sup>2</sup> Accessed from: Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) for the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) 2021

<b>International mobility</b>	The intention is to support one international mobility opportunity, to take place at a point during the six year programme where it will have maximum benefit for the development of the lecturer
Note: * Academics who already hold a doctoral degree, and who embark on post-doctoral studies, should be allocated a 50% workload allocation for the first three years and a full workload thereafter. Workload includes the overall work done by an academic (i.e. preparations for lectures, teaching, research, marking, administrative work and community involvement)	

The nGAP funds provided by DHET covers the cost of the scholar's salary, contribution towards registration and tuition fees, mentoring, contribution towards participation in the SSAU (Staffing South Africa's Universities) Development Programme, infrastructure and equipment, e.g. laptops and international conference/mobility (Table 2). The notable exclusion is research running costs.

**Table 2. Categories of funding support for nGAP scholars from the DHET**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Maximum % covered by DHET</b>
Salary costs of the nGAP appointees	18% (54% over the 3-year period) of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for each of the <u>first three years</u>
	14% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for the <u>fourth year</u> (university contribution to meet gap)
	9% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for the <u>fifth year</u> (university contribution to meet gap)
	5% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for the <u>sixth year</u> (university contribution to meet gap)
Contribution towards registration and tuition fees for postgraduate studies of the nGAP academic	2% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full registration period
Costs associated with assigning a mentor for each nGAP academic	4% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the first four years of the nGAP programme
Costs associated with the nGAP academics' participation in the SSAU-DP	6% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full programme
Costs of equipment and activities required for research studies work of the nGAP academic	5% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full programme
International conference / mobility participation costs	1% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full programme
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100% = Specific allocated amount for the 6 year programme</b>

## ***DSTI-NRF nGAP Research Development Grant***

The DSTI-NRF Research Development Grants for nGAP Scholars in the PhD and Post-PhD track was initiated in 2015. Even though nGAP scholars are eligible to apply for funds for research costs and postgraduate training through competitive funding instruments managed by the NRF, the DSTI-NRF makes dedicated start-up funding available through the *DSTI-NRF Research Development Grant* for all newly appointed nGAP scholars. The purpose of the Research Development Grant is primarily to provide initial funding in support of the scholars research development. The expectation is that new nGAP incumbents will also apply for other competitive research grants both through the NRF and other funding agencies within their first or second year of appointment.

Eligible nGAP scholars in their first and second year of appointment may apply for the Research Development Grant to assist them to develop and submit competitive proposals for funding instruments such as the Thuthuka PhD and Post-PhD tracks. Additionally, nGAP scholars with a university approved research proposal may utilise the Research Development Grant to cover the costs of their research activities.

The NRF funding must also respond to three strategic priorities of the 7th democratic administration. Therefore, NRF grantees must be mindful of these priorities which are – a commitment to drive inclusive growth and job creation. A clear focus to reduce poverty and to tackle the high cost of living. A resolve to build a capable, ethical and developmental state. By aligning their research agendas and thematic areas with these priorities, NRF grantees will play a pivotal role in supporting the government’s objectives and driving positive societal change.

## **2. Rationale**

The rationale for providing the *DSTI-NRF Research Development Grants for nGAP Scholars* is to ensure that they receive holistic and complementary support for honing their skills in teaching and learning, research and postgraduate student supervision. In addition to the funding categories presented in Table 2 above which are covered by the DHET, the *DSI-NRF Research Development Grants for nGAP Scholars* provides funding for two (2) years to cover the following:

- Proposal development (bespoke funding e.g. mobility, research instrument development, statistical technical support; literature review; or supervisor/ collaborator/community engagements); and/or

- Research costs for university approved research projects (including travel, materials and supplies, small research equipment or science engagement).

The NRF grant **may not** be used to cover the costs provided for by the DHET viz.:

- Salary costs for nGAP scholars;
- Registration and tuition fees;
- Mentoring costs;
- Participation in the SSAU Development Programme;
- Equipment e.g. laptops; and
- Conference (local and international) / mobility participation costs

The NRF grant **may not** be used to fund the following:

- Students;
- Research Assistants;
- International Conference attendance/travel;
- Laptops/desk tops, iPhones, iPads, smartphones, tablets etc.;
- Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs;
- Computer software and licencing;
- Membership fees.

### 3. Objectives

The objectives of the grant are to:

- Accelerate the doctoral level training of nGAP scholars in the PhD track at public universities;
- Effect transformation in the demographic profile of the emerging researcher community with respect to gender, race and persons with disabilities through support for nGAP scholars in the Post-PhD track;
- Provide Research Development Grants for nGAP Scholars in their first and second year of appointment to assist these scholars to develop and submit research grant applications aligned to the Thuthuka PhD and Post-PhD tracks;
- To support nGAP scholars, in the first and second year of appointment, that have a university approved research project, with start-up research funding while they apply for competitive research grants to the NRF and other agencies.

## 4. Eligibility

To qualify for the grant, applicants must comply with the following eligibility criteria:

- Applicants must be in their **first or second or year** of appointment as nGAP scholars at a public university in South Africa;
- Appointed nGAP scholars must hold a minimum qualification of a Master's degree to apply for the PhD track and a doctoral degree to apply for the Post-PhD track;
- Applicants must be South African citizens or permanent residents<sup>3</sup>;
- Applicants that hold a valid NRF rating are not eligible to apply; and
- Applicants who are currently NRF research grantholders are not eligible to apply.

## 5. Funding Principles

### 5.1. Institution

The number of applications an institution may submit, in any given financial year, is limited to the number of nGAP scholars in their first or second year of appointment.

### 5.2. Demographics

The demographic targets will be in alignment with the approved targets for the nGAP, i.e. 80% of the awards must be to Black South Africans (African, Coloured and Indian men and women including people with disabilities), of which at least 55% of the positions should be taken up by Black women.

### 5.3. Financial Support

The grant is intended to fund research costs and/or research proposal development in order to prepare the nGAP scholar to apply to the NRF for a competitive research grant that will be subjected to merit review.

In the budget section under brief description of planning activities the following must be included for your budget to be considered:

- A clear plan for all project activities to be undertaken;
- Timelines for each activity planned;

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of application, only persons with a valid South African ID number will be considered as a South African Permanent Resident, and not those in the process of applying for permanent residency. The latter will be considered as International candidates.

- Projected outputs; and
- Itemised cost breakdown with budget motivations for the requested budget.

**Note that applications that do not provide an activity plan and motivated budget will not be approved for funding.** These can be submitted as an attachment.

The following funding principles will apply:

- Grantholders are not permitted to change to any other NRF funding stream during the academic year;
- This grant may not be held concurrently with any other NRF research grant; and
- In cases where the *DSTI-NRF Research Development Grant for nGAP Scholars* and another NRF research grant are submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the *DSTI-NRF Research Development Grant for nGAP Scholars* will not be awarded.

## 6. Awards and Period of Funding

Two types of awards will be provided based on the level of the nGAP scholar, namely:

- An award of R30 000 per annum for two years for nGAP scholars in the PhD track; and
- An award of R50 000 per annum for two years for nGAP scholars in the Post-PhD track.

Grantholders must be registered with a South African public University. No carry-over of unspent funds will be permitted under this funding instrument, except under extenuating circumstances, e.g., ill-health, and must be motivated for in writing. The grant is not transferable to another grantholder.

## 7. Application Principles

Applications should be submitted on the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. Applicants must complete the online application template indicating the activities that will be supported by the Research Development Grant, timelines and a budget breakdown and expected outputs.

### Note:

- Applicants must be registered on the NRF Connect system in order to create and complete an application.

- This will be a closed call for eligible applicants only, i.e. those who are appointed nGAP scholars at a public university in South Africa and who meet all the eligibility criteria.
- Qualifications must be uploaded in the *Curriculum Vitae* (CV) section on the NRF Connect system.

### 7.1. Review Criteria

The applications submitted to the NRF will undergo a technical review only to ensure accountability and appropriate utilisation of funds that are released. Approval of the grants will be in accordance with standard NRF grant approvals by senior management. A template for Project schedule/Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) is attached to this call which may be used by applicants.

The selection criteria for the technical review is tabulated below:

**Table 3: Review Criteria of applications**

Review Criteria/ Weight	Description
<b>1. Project Plan</b> (PhD track - 50%) (Post-PhD track - 50%)	Project plan with activities, timelines and projected outputs.
<b>2. Budget Motivation</b> (PhD track - 50%) (Post-PhD track - 50%)	Itemised budget breakdown and a well-motivated budget justification for the requested budget amounts.

### 7.2. Attachments

The following documents will be required in the application attachment section.

- A letter from a South African public university confirming the appointment of the applicant as an nGAP scholar; or
- A signed acceptance, by the applicant, of an offer of appointment as an nGAP scholar at a South African public university.

The following can also be sent as an attachment:

- Project plan with activities;
- Project schedule/Work Breakdown Structure (WBS).

**Note:**

The Proof of a certified South African Identity Document (ID) or proof of Permanent Residency (SA ID Document/Number) must be uploaded in the Personal Profile section and should not be uploaded under Attachments.

### **7.3. Post-Award Process**

Successful candidates will be notified by the NRF regarding the DSTI-NRF Research Development Grants for nGAP scholars' award. All successful candidates should accept all the necessary documents / Conditions of Grant related to the acceptance of the award on their NRF Connect profiles. Candidates in the PhD Track must submit proof of registration.

### **7.4. Research Ethics**

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research in accordance with institutional ethical policies and procedures. The ethical clearance approval should be held by the institution and the grantholder and accessible on request, if necessary.

Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/>.

## **8. Reporting**

The NRF will monitor and evaluate the progress of the nGAP grantholders at an individual, institutional and funding instrument level as follows:

- All grantholders are required to submit a Progress Report (PR) before 15 February each year; covering performance and financials of the previous funding year.
- In the case of continuing grantholders, the NRF will use these reports to assess project performance against timeframes and deliverables as indicated in the original application prior to releasing funding for the second grant year.

## 9. Renewal of Grant

Continued funding for year two will be subject to the following:

- The submission of a PR for the first year of funding and meeting the deliverables for year one.
- A recommendation by the supervisor that the grant may be renewed for the second year. The supervisor's details must be inserted in the Supervisor/Host of Research Details section of the PR.

## 10. Mentorship

The NRF recognises mentorship as an important mechanism for the professional development and guidance of emerging researchers including postdoctoral fellows. The DSTI and Universities South Africa (USAf) has established an online platform (Thuso Connect and Thuso Resources) to support emerging researchers and academics through the provision of tools, information and mentorship to everyone seeking to grow their research career. Thuso Connect is a national online platform designed to give South African researchers and scholars an opportunity to participate in an online, interactive mentorship programme. All the grantholders are encouraged to visit the Thuso Resources website on the following link <https://thusoresources.usaf.ac.za/> and enrol on the Thuso Connect national online platform for the mentorship programme.

## 11. Enquiries

For any further assistance and information relating to the DSI-NRF Research Development Grant for nGAP Scholars, please contact the Research, Financial Aid/Bursary/Postgraduate Office at your institution before contacting the following NRF staff.

### **Sello Moloi**

Professional Officer: Next Generation and Emerging Researchers (NGER)

Tel: 012 481 4249

Email: [SP.Moloi@risa.nrf.ac.za](mailto:SP.Moloi@risa.nrf.ac.za)

**For technical NRF online submission enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk**

**during office hours from 08:00 to 16:30 from Monday to Friday.**

E-mail: [supportdesk@nrf.ac.za](mailto:supportdesk@nrf.ac.za)

**Note:** The applicants are advised to inquire well in advance before the call closes since the requests or inquiries made one week before the call closes may not be attended to due to an influx of queries.