DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Framework for the 2027 Academic Year

Date: April 2026

NRF Partners for Postgraduate Student Funding

science, technology & innovation
Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

higher education & training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NSF
National Skills Fund
FUNDING TO SKILL OUR NATION

energy mobility
education trust

MINDS
MANDELA INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

SASOL

DAAD
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

SAQA

ISFAP
Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
IIASA www.iiasa.ac.at

BRITISH COUNCIL

SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE SGCI IOSRS INITIATIVE DES ORGANISMES SUBVENTIONNAIRES DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

*For more information on the NRF partners, please refer to Annexure A

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1 Introduction

An Act of Parliament mandates the National Research Foundation (NRF), the NRF Act (Act No. 23 of 1998, amended), to: *contribute to national development by promoting and supporting research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of research, including indigenous knowledge and thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic*." In giving effect to its mandate, the NRF is guided by a Transformation Framework that identifies the specific need to focus on the transformation of the equity profiles of the South African research workforce of the knowledge enterprise; the relationship between science and society; and the building of a diverse and fully inclusive learning organisation. Additionally, the NRF, through the projects it supports, will promote the societal and knowledge impact of research. Knowledge impact refers to scientific advances in understanding, interpretation, methods, theory, application, and related advances that bring about positive change within and/or across various disciplines and fields. Societal impact refers to the value that research adds to society across various social, economic, or environmental spheres. Societal impact reflects the direct or indirect relationship between research, or the research process, and improvement in the quality of people's lives, inclusive of innovation, technological advancements, and policy developments.

Transformation of the equity profiles of the South African research workforce relies on the ability to attract, nurture, and retain high academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level. The NRF is prioritising postgraduate students with research inclination as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of researchers and scholars to sustain South Africa's knowledge enterprise. Another objective is to fast-track the development of postgraduate students in high-impact, priority, and vulnerable disciplines critical for national socioeconomic development.

In 2021, the NRF implemented the *DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding Policy,* wherein principles of equity and equal opportunity underpin postgraduate funding

allocations representativity, prioritisation, and enhanced access, success, and throughput. The *DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding Policy* gives effect to the Ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DSTI/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships (2013). Citizenship, age, gender, and disability are considered in funding allocation, with the transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Financial need is included as a criterion for determining the modality of funding. To attract and retain a diverse range of students, funding modalities include cover at the full cost of study for students who meet the required criteria. In order to develop a future cohort of researchers and scholars, it is vital that postgraduate students complete their studies without delay and continue through to completion of their doctoral studies. To advance these priorities, the NRF will offer funding for full-time studies from honours to the doctoral degree level, **subject to satisfactory performance at each consecutive postgraduate level**.

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation guidelines. The context within which the NRF functions is informed by various strategic frameworks, legislation, policies, and government plans. This framework document should be read together with the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) System (2018); The Strategy for Human Capacity Development for Research, Innovation and Scholarships (2016); National Development Plan (2030); and the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Decadal Plan 2022 (https://www.dsti.gov.za/index.php/documents/strategies-and-reports/189-sti-decadal-plan).

In conclusion, the NRF funding must also respond to three strategic priorities of the 7th democratic administration. The NRF grantees must be mindful of these priorities, which are a commitment to drive inclusive growth and job creation, a clear focus on reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living, and 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 Global Knowledge Partnerships (GKP)

The Global Knowledge Partnerships presents international scholarship opportunities for exceptional doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows, and early career/emerging researchers working closely with higher education and research institutions. For further information, kindly refer to the Global Knowledge Partnership implementation framework at https://www.nrf.ac.za/gpfd2026.

3 Areas of Support

The DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding supports honours, master's, and doctoral candidates to pursue full-time studies at South African public universities in all areas of Science, Engineering, Technology, Social Sciences, and Humanities, including Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

We focus on research aligned with one of the National Priority Research Areas and research conducted in alignment with the thematic focus areas outlined in the STI Decadal Plan 2022 - 2032, which serves as an implementation guide for the 2019 White Paper on STI.

The percentage split of overall students that the NRF will support is 80% from the Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) disciplines and 20% from the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

4 Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Eligibility for first-time applicants for honours, master's, and doctoral funding

i. Nationality

- Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible to apply for honours scholarships. (Except for SARAO honours scholarships – see Section 4.3)

- South African citizens and permanent residents, and all the other nationalities (with valid passports and study permits) are eligible to apply for master's and doctoral scholarships.
- Persons with valid refugee and asylum seeker permits are only eligible under the NRF-SAQA Scholarship programme.

ii. Age

- No age restrictions during the application stage. For the purposes of allocating funding, 80% of funding will be awarded to applicants who fall within the stipulated age restrictions, while 20% will be allocated to applicants who fall outside of these age restrictions. Further details regarding the applicable age restrictions are provided in Section 13.

iii. Minimum Academic Requirements

a) **For first-time honours funding -** A minimum average of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study OR a minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate certificate (NQF level 7).

b) **For first-time master's funding -** A minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level OR a minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate diploma OR a minimum average of 65% for all final year subjects of a four-year degree.

c) **For first-time doctoral funding -** A minimum of 65% at the master's level.

***Note**: For applicants currently completing a prior qualification, eligibility will be assessed using the latest available results. Only applicants meeting the 65% threshold in these results will be considered. Scholarship offers may be revoked if the required minimum is not achieved upon completion of the prior qualification*

IMPORTANT: South African citizens or permanent resident applicants who have **graduated from the 2021 academic year with a classification of Pass will NOT**

be eligible to apply for NRF Funding. Only applicants with a numerical pass mark may apply for NRF funding. However, the following individuals without a numerical mark are eligible to apply:

- South African citizens or permanent residents who graduated before the 2021 academic year with a 'Pass' or a 'Pass with a distinction.' Applicants with a 'Pass' should enter the word 'Pass' under the academic achievement section of the application form, and applicants who passed with a distinction should enter 75%;
- International citizens with an international degree applying for master's and doctoral scholarships should enter the word 'Pass' in the application form.
- South African citizens with international qualifications applying for master's and doctoral scholarships should also enter the word 'Pass' in the application form.
- Refugees and asylum seekers with SAQA certificate of evaluation

iv. Eligibility criteria for funding at Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS)

The eligibility criteria for funding at Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS) listed in Table 1 apply to all first-time applicants for honours, master's, and doctoral funding.

Table 1. Eligibility criteria for first-time applicants for the NRF postgraduate funding for Full Cost of Study and Partial Cost of Study for the 2027 academic year

Study Level	Full Cost of Study		Partial Cost of Study
	Exceptional Achievers	**Financially Needy and Applicants with a Disability**	**Other**
Honours	• Average results of ≥ 75% mark for major subjects in the final year of	• Average results of ≥ 65% mark for major subjects in the final year of	• Average results of ≥ 65% mark for major subjects in the final

Study Level	Full Cost of Study		Partial Cost of Study
	Exceptional Achievers	**Financially Needy and Applicants with a Disability**	**Other**
	undergraduate study OR • A minimum average of 75% for all subjects of a postgraduate certificate (NQF level 7)	undergraduate study OR • A minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate certificate (NQF level 7)	year of undergraduate study OR • A minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate certificate (NQF level 7)
Master's	• A minimum average of 75% for all subjects at the honours level; OR • A minimum average of 75% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma level; OR • Minimum average of 75% for final year subjects of a four-year degree	• A minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level; OR • A minimum average of 65% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma; OR • A minimum average of 65% for final year subjects of a four-year degree	• A minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level; OR • A minimum average of 65% for all subjects for a Postgraduate diploma; OR • A minimum average of 65% for final year subjects of a four-year degree

Study Level	Full Cost of Study		Partial Cost of Study
	Exceptional Achievers	**Financially Needy and Applicants with a Disability**	**Other**
Doctoral	Minimum average of 75% for Master's degree	A minimum average of 65% for Master's degree	A minimum average of 65% for Master's degree
• Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible for honours scholarships. • Persons with valid refugee and asylum seeker permits are only eligible under the NRF-SAQA Scholarship programme at Partial Cost of Study (PCS) at Master's level.			

- Only South African citizens and permanent residents who are financially needy (as per financial means test outcomes or Proof of NSFAS/ ISFAP funding), living with a disability, or exceptional academic achievers are eligible for FCS.
- Applicants eligible for FCS may be awarded funding at PCS due to budget constraints.
- The PCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens and permanent residents, with 5% going to international students.

The NRF reserves the right not to award or adjust a grant from PCS to FCS under any circumstances (Refer to section 13 for further information on funding considerations).

4.2 Additional eligibility criteria for first-time applicants for master's and doctoral funding who commenced their studies on a part-time basis

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1:

i. Applicants who commenced their master's and doctoral studies on a part-time basis and wish to be considered for funding to complete their studies on a full-time basis may apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However:

a) Only students who will be registered on a full-time basis for their second or third year of master's studies in 2027 may apply and

b) Only students who will be registered full-time for their second, third, or fourth year of doctoral studies in 2027 may apply.

c) The initial date for registration of the degree will be considered to determine the support period if the student's application is successful.

ii. The eligibility period for individuals who took gap year(s) due to exceptional circumstances will be calculated from the date of initial registration, excluding any gap year(s) taken. A valid proof must accompany the motivation.

4.3 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-SARAO applicants

Applicants for SARAO postgraduate scholarships should note the following:

i. For NRF-SARAO honours scholarships, the call opening and closing dates are different from the NRF general honours scholarship call. Please refer the table in section 8 of this document.

ii. For NRF-SARAO honours scholarships, SARAO will only consider applications from South African citizens or permanent residents, and from citizens of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia.

iii. For NRF-SARAO Master's and Doctoral scholarships, SARAO will only consider applications from South African citizens or permanent residents, and from citizens of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia.

iv. For NRF-SARAO Master's and Doctoral scholarships, SARAO will ONLY consider applicants who wish to pursue research that is relevant to the scientific and technical goals of the SKA and MeerKAT radio telescopes.

v. For NRF-SARAO freestanding (non-grant holder linked scholarships), Master's and Doctoral scholarships, applicants must select a pre-approved research project. The process for selecting a pre-approved project is provided in the relevant application guide, available on the NRF and the SARAO website (https://www.sarao.ac.za/students/funding/).

vi. NRF-SARAO freestanding applicants and grant holder-linked applicants (i.e. applicants linked to a SARAO Research Chair or a SARAO Research Group) must select the **SARAO Scholarship** option in the application form.

4.4 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-DAAD applicants

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1, applicants for the NRF-DAAD master's and doctoral funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

i. Only South African citizens and permanent residents are eligible for master's and doctoral bursaries.
ii. Only applicants that are eligible for FCS funding will be awarded NRF-DAAD funding.
iii. Applicants should be interested in an education and cultural exchange with Germany.
iv. A brief motivation on the interest to undertake a three (3) to six (6) months research visit in Germany must also indicate if they have established collaborations in Germany; if they do, the applicant must provide the details of the collaborator.

4.5 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-SASOL FOUNDATION applicants

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1, applicants for the NRF-SASOL honours, master's, and doctoral funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

i. Only South African citizens are eligible for honours, master's, and doctoral scholarships.
ii. Only applicants who are eligible for FCS funding will be awarded NRF-SASOL FOUNDATION funding.
iii. Only applicants registered for chemistry, environmental sciences, agriculture, and related disciplines with a specific focus on green economy at the following South African public universities: University of Fort Hare, University of Limpopo, University of Venda, University of Free State (Qwaqwa Campus), University of Mpumalanga, University of Western Cape and North-West University (Mahikeng Campus) will be awarded NRF-SASOL FOUNDATION funding.

4.6 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-MINDS applicants

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1, applicants for the NRF-MINDS funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

i. Applicants must be nationals of an African country other than South Africa and not residing in South Africa. Only a maximum of 10% of the total number of awarded

scholarships will go to candidates already within the country. Candidates must provide evidence of the reasons for being in the country.

ii. The NRF-MINDS programme is targeted at specialist postgraduate study in fields in short supply on the African continent. The priority research fields are: Water-Energy-Food Nexus, Smart Economy; African Heritage (People, Spaces, and Settlements); ICT; Artificial Intelligence and Robotics; and Health (and Well-being).

iii. Applicants must demonstrate leadership potential related to the priority research fields.

4.7 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF- Sub-Saharan African Systems Analysis Centre (SASAC), applicants

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1, applicants for the NRF-SASAC doctoral funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

i. Applicants from South Africa and the following seventeen (17) African countries participating in the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI): Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the Sub-Saharan African Regional Member Organisation (SSARMO), are eligible to apply;

ii. Students are required to have a supervisor from South Africa who is recognised as an expert in systems analysis methodology, and preferably a co-supervisor or mentor with a UK researcher and/or IIASA or an IIASA alumnus; and

iii. Applicants must demonstrate leadership potential.

4.8 Additional eligibility criteria for NRF-EM Education Trust applicants

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1, applicants for the NRF-EM Education Trust funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

i. Only South African citizens are eligible for honours, master's, and doctoral scholarships

ii. Applicants must be South African black students pursuing studies in Commerce and STEM disciplines a specific focus on Mathematical Science, Data Science, Computer Science, Green Economy, Renewable Energy, and Climate Change.

iii. Applicants must be studying at one of the following universities: the University of Fort Hare, the University of Limpopo, the University of Pretoria, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of the Western Cape, and the University of Johannesburg.

iv. Priority will be given to students living with disabilities.

4.9 Eligibility for NRF Uninterrupted Study Support

Uninterrupted study support is funding postgraduate students from the honours up to the doctoral level. However, students must submit a new scholarship application for each study level. NRF makes all attempts to provide uninterrupted study support within available budgets.

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 4.1, NRF-funded students will be eligible for uninterrupted study support provided that they meet the following requirements:

i. The NRF-funded degree is completed within the NRF funding periods, which are one (1) year for a full-time honours degree and two (2) years for a full-time master's degree;
ii. Register for a master's degree immediately after completing the honours degree
iii. Register for a doctoral degree immediately after completing the master's degree;
iv. Meet all the university and NRF requirements for postgraduate funding;
v. Submit a new scholarship application for each level of study and
vi. Submit the required progress report for the relevant levels of support.

4.10 Eligibility for Extension Support applicants for full-time master's and doctoral studies

The eligibility criteria for applicants for Extension Support for full-time master's and doctoral studies in 2027 are as follows:

i. Applicants must be NRF scholarship-holders in 2027. Extensions will only be granted under exceptional circumstances and will be for either six (6) or twelve (12) months, as the NRF expects all postgraduate students to complete their qualifications within the NRF funding period;

ii. Applicants applying for extension support at the master's level must have registered for their master's degree in 2025 or July 2024;
iii. Applicants applying for extension support at the doctoral level must have registered for their doctoral degree in 2024 or July 2023;
iv. Only students pursuing full-time master's or doctoral studies in South Africa are eligible to apply;
v. Applicants for extension support will be eligible for postgraduate funding at the same value as their 2026 funding, and
vi. Applicants must have supervisor support for the Extension application to be considered.

4.11 Individuals not eligible for NRF Postgraduate Funding

The following categories of individuals are not eligible to apply for NRF postgraduate funding:

i. Students who hold NRF funding for first-year master's studies in 2026 or first- or second-year doctoral studies in 2026, are not eligible to apply for funding as new students or first-time applicants. Students in these categories are continuing students and must submit required Progress Reports (PR) on the NRF Connect System by the stipulated cut-off date to receive funding in the 2027 academic year, as per the Conditions of Grant and NRF approved funding level;
ii. Individuals who registered for their masters' studies before July 2025;
iii. Individuals who registered for their doctoral studies before July 2024;
iv. Individuals who registered for their honours study before July 2026;
v. Individuals who graduated from the 2021 academic year without numerical marks are not allowed to apply;
vi. The eligibility period for individuals who took gap years is calculated from the date of initial registration, which includes any gap years taken. Should the total period of study exceed the NRF maximum funding period, i.e., 2 and 3 years for master's and doctoral degrees, respectively, the individual is not eligible to apply;
vii. Individuals who already hold a degree for the same level at which they intend to study are not eligible to apply, e.g., individuals that hold a postgraduate diploma qualification may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding for honours studies;

viii. Individuals who de-registered from a degree and are applying for funding for the same level may apply. However, the first date of registration for the original degree will be taken into account when determining the eligibility period for NRF funding;

ix. Individuals in their pre-proposal year in 2027 should not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding for the pre-proposal year. In the case where a master's or doctoral programme includes a pre-proposal registration year prior to the first year of the programme, the NRF will not fund the pre-proposal year. The pre-proposal year will not be counted as the first year of registration for the degree;

x. Individuals who intend to register for or are studying for a 100% master's by coursework, professional master's, or professional doctoral degree may not apply for NRF Postgraduate Funding. Further clarification of the professional degrees may be obtained from the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET);

xi. Individuals in contractual or permanent employment, whether salaried or unpaid, that exceeds 12 hours of work per week while pursuing honours, master's, or doctoral studies may not hold DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for full-time studies. The above-mentioned 12 hours of work per week only applies to the institutional students' academic services such as teaching, tutorials, and assistance or demonstration duties during the year of study;

xii. Individuals who are on sabbatical leave from their current employment may not apply for DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding;

xiii. Individuals, including BTech qualification holders, who intend to study towards a Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate in Education and any postgraduate qualification that does not entail research as a core component.

xiv. Students pursuing an undergraduate degree irrespective of the degree they are enrolled for.

xv. Students who are currently nominated under a grantholder's NRF research grant with a zero value are not eligible to apply for extension support; and

xvi. Students who will be registered for two or more degrees simultaneously, regardless of NQF exit levels per degree.

5 Financial Means Test

The **DHET** currently defines **financially needy students** as individuals from households with a **combined gross family income of no more than R350 000** (three hundred and fifty thousand rands) per annum.

Applicants who provide the required consent will be subjected to a financial means test to determine their financial need status. Applicants for DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding who were previously supported by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) will not be subjected to a financial means test. However, they **must attach proof** as an official university-stamped financial statement or signed agreement with NSFAS or ISFAP. **If proof is not attached at the time of application, the applicant will be eligible and considered for PCS.** A financial means test is conducted annually by 01 September. Continuing NRF-funded students requesting financial means tests should liaise with the institutions and complete the relevant documents to be submitted by the institutions to the NRF by 14 August. The outcomes will be made available by 11 December.

The NRF acknowledges that there are financially needy applicants who may not have undergone a financial means test before applying to the NRF for postgraduate funding. Therefore, a financial means test for those applicants will be facilitated in partnership with ISFAP. Applicants who need to undertake a financial means test must provide the following:

i. Completed NRF-ISFAP consent form certified by a Commissioner of Oaths uploaded to the Financial Need section of the online application;
ii. A consent form must be co-signed by the household contributor(s) on whom the financial means test will be conducted, and their ID numbers must be included on the online application form and
iii. Consent to the NRF-ISFAP, and/or any party it designates, the absolute right and permission to conduct creditworthy checks and affordability assessments and to verify combined household income to determine eligibility for NRF-ISFAP funding.

The above checks and assessments by NRF-ISFAP will be conducted strictly in accordance and/or in compliance with the provisions of the National Credit Act No 34 of 2005.

Applicants previously funded by Funza Lushaka, the Department of Military Veterans, or the Department of Social Development (DSD) bursaries for their undergraduate studies must undergo a financial means test upon application for DSI-NRF postgraduate student funding. Typically, students funded by Funza Lushaka, Department of Military Veterans, or DSD are nominated by the funder, and financial need is not a criterion in the award of the undergraduate bursaries (although the bursaries are administered *via* NSFAS); hence they will be subjected to a financial means test at the postgraduate level.

6 Applicable Allowances

Successful applicants will be funded either at FCS or PCS, refer to **Table 2.**

Students with a disability may apply for **additional funding** for an **assistive technology device** of up to **R20 000**. This is the **maximum amount allowed** during the tenure of the scholarship. **An assistive device** is defined as any device, product, equipment, or tool that is designed or adapted to enable persons with disabilities to participate in activities, tasks, or actions, including (i) **mobility aids** such as wheelchairs, prostheses, and crutches as well as service animals (ii) **communication aids** such as hearing aids, Frequency Modulation (FM) systems; (iii) **sensory aids** such as white canes; noise reducing headphones and coloured lenses (iv) **technology aids** such as computers for alternate and augmentative communication, screen readers, magnifiers, texts in audio format (Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the PSET, 2018). The assistive devices are aligned to requirements related to research purposes rather than social services; as a result, the NRF will not pay costs for human support such as guide dogs, scribes, carers, note-takers, sign language interpreters, and tutors.

Table 2: Annual NRF allowances applicable for FCS and PCS for honours, masters, and doctoral studies.

Category	Funding per level of Postgraduate Study[1]					
	Honours		Master's		Doctoral	
	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS
Value of the Scholarship per Annum (Rand)	**180 000**	**140 000**	**190 000**	**145 000**	**200 000**	**150 000**
Electronic study device allowance (Rand)[2]	10 000	n/a	10 000	n/a	10 000	n/a
Maximum Assistive Technology Device (Rand)[3]	20 000	n/a	20 000	n/a	20 000	n/a

[1.] The scholarship amounts will be reviewed every 3 years subject to the agreed CPI-linked sector-wide increases.
[2.] The electronic study device allowance will be provided as a once-off allowance for the duration of postgraduate studies.
[3.] The Assistive Technology Device allowance will only be available for students living with a disability.

7 The Maximum Period of Support for each Postgraduate Level of Study

The DSTI-NRF postgraduate student funding supports individuals intending to register at a South African public university for full-time honours, masters, or doctoral studies. Extension support for master's and doctoral students will be approved only under exceptional circumstances. The maximum period of support for each postgraduate level of study is indicated in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Maximum period of NRF funding for each postgraduate level of study.

Level of study	Maximum period of support
Honours	One (1) year
Master's	Two (2) years
Doctoral	Three (3) years
Master's upgrade to doctoral	Four (4) years

Level of study	Maximum period of support
Extension Support for master's and doctoral	Six (6) or twelve (12) months

The support period is calculated from the first year of registration for the study or research regardless of NRF funding and excludes the pre-proposal year.

8 Application Process

Applicants must first identify the university where they will be registered for their postgraduate degree before applying for NRF funding. When an applicant submits an application on the NRF Connect System, the application is routed to the university where the applicant intends to register. The NRF Connect System can be accessed at: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za. Further application process instructions will be available in the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2027. Additionally, applicants must familiarise themselves with the NRF Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document.

Students' applications opening and closing dates are as follows:

Level of study	Opening dates	Closing dates
Honours (General)	**7 July 2026**	**23 November 2026**
NRF-SARAO Honours	**1 June 2026**	**14 August 2026**
First-time Master's	**1 April 2026**	**3 July 2026**
First-time Doctoral		**3 July 2026**
Master's and Doctoral Extension Support		**14 August 2026**

NB: Honours General Scholarships will open in July 2026, and institutions will have until the end of March 2027 to claim funds of recommended eligible students. The DA cut-off date for applications requiring ISFAP assessment is September 2026.

8.1 Grantholder-linked (GHL) associated applicants

Applicants who have been recruited by an NRF-funded supervisor to be part of a research project/group under any of the NRF Funding Instruments listed below should select **"Scholarship linked to NRF Funded Researcher"** under the **Application Category** section, and **should provide the supervisor's NRF Grant UID/reference Number (unique identification number), OR, provide the NRF Application Reference Number if the supervisor's research project application has been submitted to the NRF for review:**

- Research Chairs (SARChI);
- Centres of Excellence (CoE);
- Thuthuka;
- Global Knowledge Research Programmes such as
    - Earth Systems Science Research Programme (ESSRP);
    - Global Change Social Sciences Research Programme (GCSSRP); and
    - Risk and Vulnerability Science Centres (RVSCs);
- African Earth Observation Network (AEON);
- Foundational Biodiversity Information Programme (FBIP);
- South African Earth Observation Network (SAEON);
- National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP);
- South African Masters of Ocean Science (SAMOS);
- NRF-FREF Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP);
- Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers; and
- NRF-SASOL Young Academics Accelerator Programme (YAAP).

8.2 Non Grantholder-linked applicants

Applicants who have **not** been recruited by an NRF-funded supervisor will **not** need to provide a UID or application reference number on the online application template. These are applicants applying for: NRF General Scholarships, PDP, NRF-SASOL, NRF-DAAD, NRF-SASAC, NRF-MINDS, NRF-EM Education Trust and NRF-SARAO.

8.3 Continuing NRF funded master's and doctoral students

All **current (*2027 academic year*) NRF-funded** students who are eligible for a second or third year of funding must submit a Progress Report and not a new application. Refer to section 14. A new application should only be submitted for consideration to be funded for the next level of postgraduate study.

9 Documents to be Attached to Applications

Applicants must refer to the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2027, for a list of required attachments, as these may differ for each scholarship category.

10 Review of Applications

10.1 Review of applications by university review committees

Honours, master's, and doctoral funding applications will be reviewed at the institution where the student intends to study for the postgraduate degree. Reviews will be undertaken using standardised scorecards provided by the NRF, as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7. As a result of the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DAAD and the NRF, DAAD alumni will participate in the institutional review process provided that there are applicants that have selected NRF-DAAD funding in their application.

Only applications that are recommended by the university for NRF funding, based on the review outcome, may be submitted to the NRF by the university Designated Authority (DA). Review scores and recommendations must be uploaded onto the NRF Connect System by the university DA when approving an application on the system. Applications which are not recommended for funding after the institutional review process should be rejected on the NRF Connect System and formal review feedback should be sent to applicants by the university. **The respective institutional DA must respond to appeals that relate to the review of applications by the universities. Refer to section 11 on the role of the NRF and the universities regarding the feedback that must be provided to applicants.**

The university DA must submit a report on the review process, including comments from the reviewers, and signed by either the Deans of Faculties or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research.

10.2 Review of Applications for Strategic Initiatives

Applications that fall under specific strategic initiatives may be reviewed by separate review panels using standardised scorecards provided by the NRF, as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7. The strategic initiatives include, amongst others, the NRF-SARAO postgraduate funding, the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence (CoE's), and the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI). Based on the review, only applications recommended for NRF funding may be submitted to the NRF by the DA. Review scores and recommendations will be uploaded onto the NRF Connect System by the DA when approving an application on the system. Applications which are not recommended for funding after the institutional review process should be rejected on the NRF Connect System and formal review feedback should be sent to applicants by the university. The respective institutional DA must respond to appeals that relate to the review of applications by the universities. Refer to section 11 on the role of the NRF and the universities regarding the feedback that must be provided to applicants.

The DA must submit a report on the review process and comments from the reviewers signed by the respective Director, Deans of Faculties, or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research.

10.3 Transparency and Accountability

To be compliant with the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act 3 of 2000) and to respond to appeals from applicants, the reports on the review process undertaken must include proof of the following:

i. The names of committee or panel members of subject experts that participated in the review of applications for DSTI-NRF postgraduate student funding;
ii. Minutes of the review meeting and sign-off by the Chairperson of the review committee;
iii. Recommendations made by the panel on whether applications are recommended or not recommended for funding, with clearly stated reasons and

iv. Correctly allocated scores against each criterion per weighting provided in the relevant scorecard.

v. Institutions should submit the review confirmation documents by 29 September 2026.

vi. Applications not meeting the above criteria will not be considered by the NRF, and the affected applicants should enquire with their university designated authorities.

10.4 Standardised review scorecards for reviewing applications

Four standardised scorecards, as shown in **Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7,** must be used to review applications for honours, master's, doctoral, and extension support funding, respectively.

Table 4. Review Scorecard for First-Time Applications for Honours Level Funding

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Academic merit (40%)	The average percentage mark for major subjects in final-year undergraduate or postgraduate certificate courses (NQF level 7).
2. Completion time for undergraduate degree (40%)	Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree or postgraduate certificate courses (NQF level 7).
3. Priority Research Area (20%)	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.

Table 5. Review Scorecard for New Applications for Master's Level Funding

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Academic merit (35%)	Average percentage mark for the honours degree if completed; **or** Average percentage mark f**or** major subjects in the final-year undergraduate courses or postgraduate certificate courses (NQF level 7) for applicants currently registered for the honours degree;

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
	or Average percentage mark for major subjects in the third-year undergraduate courses for applicants in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
2. Completion time for previous degree (15%)	Time taken to complete the honours degree if completed; **or** Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree or postgraduate certificate courses (NQF level 7) if the honours degree is in progress; **or** Time taken to complete third-year undergraduate courses for applicants in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
3. Priority Research Area (20%)	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.
4. Project Outline (30%)	Provide an overview of your research concept and your proposed aims and objectives.

Table 6. Review Scorecard for New Applications for Doctoral Level Funding

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Academic merit (30%)	Percentage mark for the master's degree is completed; **or** If the master's degree is in progress, the average percentage mark for the honours degree; **or**

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
	Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
2. Completion time for previous degree (15%)	Time taken for completion of the master's degree if completed; **or** If the master's degree is in progress, the time taken to complete the honours degree or four-year undergraduate degree.
3. Track record or Research Outputs (15%)	Evidence of research outputs in accredited peer-reviewed publications and presentations at conferences/symposiums.
4. Priority Research Area (10%)	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.
5. Originality of the Doctoral study (20%)	Problem statement, Identified knowledge gaps relating to the study's problem statement, Aim, and Objectives.
6. Potential Impact of the research (Societal and/ or Knowledge) of the research (10%)	Potential to contribute to national research strategies and the strategic goals of the knowledge economy.

Table 7. Review Scorecard for Master's and Doctoral Level Extension Support

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Progress to date (25%)	Report on research work completed in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree.
2. Reasons why the study could not be completed in the NRF maximum funding period (25%)	Explanation of why the study could not be completed within the NRF funding period.

3. Work plan to complete the degree within the indicated timeframes (50%)	1. Work plan for six (6) or twelve (12) months, indicating activities for completion of master's or doctoral degree, indicating the start and completion date of each activity; 2. Proposed date for submission of the dissertation for examination; 3. Timelines for corrections to dissertation from reviewers; 4. Details of manuscripts to be drafted and submission timelines; and 5. Proposed graduation date.

11 Feedback to Applicants

Applicants must refer to the **DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide** for 2027, regarding the role of the NRF and the universities in feedback for submitted applications.

12 Appeals

Appeals relating to the review process will be undertaken by the university that reviewed the application. Appeals are only based on an unsuccessful outcome during the review process, i.e., unfair comments from the review panel or scientific merit. **The universities must provide review feedback to applicants**. The appeal process is made available to students with a valid appeal that is supported by the institution. Appellants are linked to a closed call process which opens after the NRF has finalized all awards and unsuccessful letters to grantholders and or applicants. Appeals may not be lodged against the funding decision, such as PCS funding or not being awarded funding due to budget constraints.

13 Funding allocation, Equity and Redress

The NRF applies measures for enhancing equity, fairness, and justice in accordance with the South African Constitution. The NRF adheres to the Immigration Act of 2002, which states that the holder of a permanent resident permit *"has all the rights, privileges, duties and obligations of a citizen, save for those rights, privileges, duties, and obligations which a law or the Constitution explicitly ascribes to citizenship."* Additionally, the NRF adheres to and supports the SADC protocol on education and training, requiring member states to reserve at least 5% of admissions for students from South African Development

Community (SADC) nations other than their own, treating these as home students for purposes of tuition and accommodation.

In line with the national imperative of enhancing equity of postgraduate student access, success, and throughput using funding, all postgraduate funding must prioritise support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups, *viz*. Black, female, and persons living with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the merit review and selection criteria are supported. Additionally, the NRF will prioritise applicants who are financially needy yet academically capable and previously funded by the NSFAS, NRF, and/or ISFAP and as well as former DSTI-HSRC interns.

All DSTI-NRF postgraduate student funding will be allocated as follows:

- **95%** to South African citizens and permanent residents
- **5%** to students from the SADC countries and the rest of the world; and
- **55%** to women.

The **South African Citizens and permanent residents' targets** are further disaggregated in terms of **race and disability** as follows:

- **90%** Black (African, Coloured and Indian);
- **10%** White; and
- **1%** of Students living with a disability.

Age restriction:

1. There is a “No age restriction” category, where 20% of the funding would be allocated to students; and
2. There is an “Age restriction” category, where 80% of the funding would be allocated to students in this category:
    a. Approved students for honours funding must be 28 years or younger in the year of application, i.e., applicants must not be older than 28 years by 31 December 2026;

b. Approved students for master's funding must be 30 years or younger in the year of application, i.e., applicants must not be older than 30 years by 31 December 2026; and

c. Approved students for doctoral funding must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application, i.e., applicants must not be older than 32 years by 31 December 2026.

When the NRF makes funding decisions, consideration will be given to ensuring the need to strengthen research capacity in scarce skills, priority skills, and knowledge fields as well as to accelerate the demographic transformation. The following criteria will determine allocation of funding: Recommendation by the institutional merit-review panel; NRF Annual Performance Plan (APP) targets; Institutional rate of scholarship awards uptake; Postgraduate enrolments at each university; Institutional spread; Knowledge domains as specified by the funder; Financially need as determined by ISFAP facilitated household means test; Previously NRF, NSFAS and/or ISFAP funded students, as well as previously DSTI-HSRC interns and availability of budget.

14 Progress Reporting

All continuing students who are eligible for continuation of scholarship funding for the next year of study must submit a Progress Report (PR) and not a new application. Final-year students must submit final-year reports.

All students who have received the DSTI-NRF postgraduate student funding at either FCS or PCS, as well as those students funded under the old NRF policy, are required to submit Progress Reports on the NRF Connect system on the dates indicated in the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG).

Students will be expected to submit the Annual Progress Reports to the NRF as follows:

i. Honours students are expected to submit a certificate of honours degree completion to the Postgraduate and/or Research Office at their respective institutions after graduation.

ii. Current honours grant-holders who wish to pursue a master's degree must submit a new masters scholarship application to be considered for NRF funding.

Master's and **doctoral students** must submit the progress reports on the NRF Connect System, see **Table 8.**

Table 8: Progress Reporting for Master's, Doctoral, and Extension Support Grantholders.

Levels of study	Opening date for progress reports	The cut-off date for progress reports	Number of reports to be submitted at the end of the degree
Master's	November Annually	Mid-February Annually (during the year of study)	Two (2)
Doctoral			Three (3)
Extension Support			One (1)

Failure to submit a progress report on time will result in the cancellation of a grant for the subsequent year(s), and the grantholder will not be eligible for further funding at the postgraduate level at which they were in breach of the CoG. Students will not be considered for funding for the next level of study if they have failed to comply with the progress reporting requirements as per the CoG.

Note: Reporting requirements for NRF-SARAO-funded postgraduate students are provided in the Conditions of Grant provided by NRF-SARAO.

15 Financial Control

The DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding awards will be managed by standard NRF financial policies and procedures. The NRF will administer the payment of the grant to successful applicants to the relevant institutions. The institutions will administer the funds on behalf of the NRF to the successful applicant to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF.

16 Monitoring and Evaluation by the NRF

The NRF will continuously monitor and review the students' Progress at an individual and institutional level. On an ongoing basis, the NRF will undertake institutional visits and focus group discussions, which will be conducted at the host universities.

16.1 NRF-DAAD Funded students

The DAAD and NRF would like to strengthen and maintain contacts with former in-country scholarship-holders; therefore, the NRF-DAAD funded final year students will receive a questionnaire that they must complete truthfully and forward to the NRF. The scholarship-holder gives consent for the questionnaire to be forwarded to the DAAD for their records. The universities should ensure that this information is submitted to the NRF as soon as the scholarship ends. The scholarship- holder is expected to uphold contact with the DAAD and join its extensive Alumni family. Please contact the DAAD Information Centre, Johannesburg, for further information (daad@wits.ac.za).

17 Postgraduate students' role in science engagement

Science Engagement (SE) is a national programme established to develop a scientifically literate society that can make informed decisions about science. It is a dynamic and inclusive programme that includes initiatives that facilitate dialogue between scientists, students, the public, learners, educators, industry, Indigenous knowledge holders, and policymakers, ensuring that scientific knowledge remains accessible, relevant, and impactful. For this purpose, various SE interventions have been structured to foster public engagement with science and in science to enhance public awareness, literacy, and capacity-building and encourage active community participation at different platforms for meaningful discussions and open dialogue to exchange knowledge across diverse audiences. Thus increasing the pool and the pipeline of a scientifically literate society that can participate and contribute towards the knowledge enterprise that seeks to solve the grand social challenges (GSCs) that negatively affect world economies.

In line with the Science Engagement Strategy (SES), grant recipients, and more specifically, postgraduate students, have been identified as key partners who can play a critical role in driving science engagement initiatives and contribute towards a scientifically literate society. Emerging researchers and professionals are uniquely positioned to

involve and/or share their research with ordinary communities for meaningful participation in their research work, mentor learners, support educators, and collaborate with industry to bridge the gaps between research, education, and public understanding of science. Their involvement in science communication, mentorship, and capacity-building initiatives ensures that scientific knowledge is shared and applied to support societal needs. Over time, communities' understanding of science can improve as they find meaning in science topics and relate better with scientific knowledge.

Postgraduate students contribute to SE across various levels, including:

Science Communication and Public Engagement

- Simplifying complex research through public lectures, science journalism, and digital content creation.
- Facilitating public science discussions, panel talks, and awareness initiatives to make scientific knowledge more accessible.

Mentorship and STEM Career Development

- Supporting learners in STEM Olympiads, Science Clubs, and research projects, inspiring future scientists.
- Acting as role models in career development initiatives, sharing their academic and professional journeys.

Citizen Science and Community-Based Research

- Leading research projects that involve communities in data collection, monitoring, and problem-solving.
- Encouraging participatory science in areas such as environmental conservation, health research, and technology adoption.

Capacity Building and Educator Support

- Conducting STEM curriculum support workshops for educators, helping integrate new scientific advancements into teaching.
- Developing learning materials, interactive resources, and science kits for classroom use.

By embedding science engagement, postgraduate students, as emerging researchers, become key drivers of science communication, mentorship, and public engagement.

Their fresh perspectives, entry-level expertise, and enthusiasm make them valuable contributors to science awareness and public understanding initiatives. Through mentorship, public outreach, industry collaboration, and citizen science, they play an essential role in shaping a scientifically engaged society while strengthening their own skills in communication, leadership, and applied research.

18 Additional Information

i. Applications for NRF funding are completed online on the NRF Connect system.
ii. All applicants have to be registered on NRF Connect (ORCID) to enable submission and consideration of applications.
iii. Successful applicants who receive a provisional award for postgraduate funding from the NRF are required to accept the NRF CoG online via NRF Connect, which will be uploaded to the application at the time of the award. The required documents must be uploaded to the system when accepting the award on NRF Connect.
iv. Successful applicants who receive the NRF-SASOL FOUNDATION scholarship who are not registered in one of the five mentioned institutions on section 4.5 or who want to change institutions after being awarded the scholarship will forfeit.
iv. Applicants recommended by universities for NRF-MINDS funding will be interviewed must demonstrate leadership potential related to the priority research fields.
v. The Student-Supervisor Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), clarifying expectations and preferences in managing the research project, must be signed by both the student and supervisor and retained by the respective university office and/or department. This MoU should be available when the NRF requests such a document when dealing with the student's unsatisfactory progress.
vi. Postgraduate funding awarded for the 2027 academic year that is not taken up by 30 April 2027 will be automatically cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.
vii. All DSTI-NRF postgraduate student funding shall be held as the primary funding towards the research study.
viii. Grantholders 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 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 students' Progress Report. Please refer to the *Statement of Expectations for DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding* available under call documents on the NRF website.

ix. The grantholder must obtain the degree for which the postgraduate funding was awarded by the contractual date, within one (1) year after NRF funding has ceased, and must notify the NRF *via* the university DA of the completion of the degree.

x. Grantholders may hold bursaries, awards, assistantships, and/ or receive emoluments from public or private institutions in conjunction with the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding. The grant may not be held concurrently with any other DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding or fully funded government scholarship/ bursary from organisation like the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research or the South African Medical Research Council.

Grantholders on "FCS" or "PCS" funding **may receive supplementary[4] or top-up[4] funding** from another private-sector source, another South African government source, the NRF supervisor's running expenses (SARChI, CoEs, etc.), or any other source (E.g., merit award), provided that the total funding received

xi. from the NRF, and the other source(s) does not exceed the institutional maximum limit.

xii. By applying, the applicant consents to the NRF for processing personal information in compliance with the "POPI Act" as required from time to time for funding and statistical purposes.

NB: Applications submitted without supervisor support under the application support input section will be deemed ineligible.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that:

- They have read and understood the requirements as outlined in the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Framework as well as the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Student Application and Funding Guide for 2027;
- They have applied for the correct category/scholarship;

- All attachments are translated into English as a medium of communication;
- A suitable supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) has been identified;
- For first-time honours applicants, the final examination results are captured in the scorecard of the application as soon as they are made available by the institution.
- For first-time master's applicants, the identified master's supervisor submit the required report *via* the NRF Connect System;
- For first-time doctoral applicants, master's supervisor, identified doctoral supervisor, submit the required report *via* the NRF Connect System;
- The application is completed in full, and the information furnished is correct;
- The university has received the application submitted on the NRF Connect System.
- To ensure that proof of NSFAS/ISFAP funding is attached at the time of application if the applicant was previously funded NSFAS/ISFAP.

19 NRF Contact Persons

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Research or Postgraduate offices at their universities for enquiries. Should there still be a need to contact the NRF, below are the contact details:

For Technical related enquiries, please contact:

NRF Support desk

Telephone: 012 481 4202

Email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za

***Queries related to specific funding opportunities can be directed to:* postgraduatequeries@risa.nrf.ac.za.**

The subject line of your email must have the following information in order to be routed correctly:

- Level i.e., Honours, Master's or Doctoral
- Funding opportunity e.g., General, SARChI, NRF-MINDS, Manus MatSci
- Application reference number starting with prefix PMDS25…

For SARAO Master's and Doctoral-related enquiries, please contact:

Annah Mashemola at amashemola@sarao.ac.za. Telephone: 011 268 3420.

For SARAO Honours-related enquiries, please contact:

Mkhululi Jodwana at mjodwana@sarao.ac.za. Telephone: 011 268 3412.

NRF FRAUD LINE to anonymously report any irregular, corrupt, or unethical conduct relating to funding:

Telephone: 0800 701 701

SMS: 39772

Website: https://www.nrf.ac.za/pixpopup-item/fraud-hotline-popup/

Annexure A: Information about the NRF partners for Postgraduate Student Funding

1. British Council

Through the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF), the British Council (https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/opportunities/international-science-partnerships-fund) offers a unique opportunity for international governments and research partners to collaborate with the UK's leading research and innovation bodies to address global challenges. The fund enables strategic science partnerships between the UK and other countries/territories where our scientific, strategic, and diplomatic interests align. Through interdisciplinary research and innovation, we aim to achieve tangible societal impacts in areas such as the planet, health, and technology. ISPF offers access to global talent, large-scale facilities, research ecosystems, and markets, enabling researchers and innovators to advance ideas to greater maturity, applicability, and commercialisation.

2. Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)

The DAAD (https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/) is the world's largest funding organisation for the international exchange of students and researchers. Since it was founded in 1925, around two million scholars in Germany and abroad have received DAAD funding. It is a registered association, whose members are German institutions of higher education and student bodies.

3. Energy Mobility Education Trust

Founded in 2014 as the BPSA Education Foundation Trust, the Energy Mobility Education Trust (https://emeducationtrust.com/), has evolved and grown over the years, shaping our identity into the Energy Mobility Education Trust. Its mandate is to facilitate access to education, skills development, and formal qualifications for young black South Africans, and our passion lies in helping our youth reach their goals and drive lasting change.

4. Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP)

The ISFAP (https://www.isfap.org.za/) was established as a funding model to sustainably cater the higher education needs and costs of SouthAfrica's poor and middle-class students. The programme aims to fast-track South Africa's skills production for the 21st century by funding the higher education costs of mainly students studying towards a

career in Occupations of High Demand (OHDs), which have been identified as critical to South Africa's economic development by the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC). These include Actuaries, Accountants, Engineers, Medical Doctors, Pharmacists and Prosthetists.

5. International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

The IIASA (https://iiasa.ac.at/) is an international research institute that advances systems analysis and applies its research methods to identify policy solutions to reduce human footprints, enhance the resilience of natural and socio-economic systems, and help achieve sustainable development goals. South Africa and seventeen (17) African countries participating in the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI): Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, are members of IIASA through the Sub-Saharan African Regional Member Organisation (SSARMO).

6. Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS)

The MINDS (https://minds-africa.org/) is a pan-African policy think tank committed to addressing the challenges affecting democratic governance and strengthening African institutions, as well as seeking new and progressive ways to transform the economic development. Established in 2010, MINDS emerged , from the observation that development efforts in Africa have failed to meet expectations regarding social, institutional and economic outcomes compared to other regions of the world. Specifically, MINDS promotes the agency of African youth in driving a transformative agenda for sustainable socioeconomic development of the continent.

7. National Skills Fund (NSF)

The NSF (https://nsf.org.za/) is a public entity established by the government to fund skills development initiatives in South Africa. With a focus on national priorities and the achievement of the Skills Development Act, the NSF supports education and training programs, including bursaries, scholarships, learnerships, and workplace-based learning. Additionally, the NSF invests in improving the post-school education and training system through capacity building, skills infrastructure, and research and innovation. Operating

under the oversight of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the NSF plays a vital role in enhancing skills development and advancing the nation's workforce.

8. Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI)

The SGCI (https://sgciafrica.org/) is a multilateral initiative established in 2015 that is strengthening the institutional capacities of 17 public science funding agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development. The programme is supported by the NRF, Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), German Research Foundation (DFG), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and science councils in 17 African countries.

9. Sasol Foundation

The Sasol Foundation (https://sasolfoundation.com/) is mandated to create impactful change through access to quality education that enables sustainable economic participation in a changing society, fuelling the growth of human potential in the fields of engineering, science, and technology.

10. South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (https://saqa.org.za/) is solely mandated by the state through the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act no 67 of 2008, to provide an evaluation and advisory service to recognise foreign qualifications of its citizens and foreign persons who seek to pursue further studies, work opportunities and to live in South Africa.

South Africa ratified the Addis Convention in 2019, of which SAQA is an implementing partner. The Addis Convention makes special provision for the recognition of qualifications of asylum seekers and refugees. It requires member states "to establish appropriate procedures to assess whether refugees and internally displaced persons respectfully fulfil relevant requirements to access higher education through recognition of prior learning and qualifications for employability and integration (Article III.2, Clause 5).

SAQA/NRF scholarships aim to support refugees and asylum seekers by facilitating their access to postgraduate studies and enabling their enrolment in postgraduate programs at South African HEIs.