

Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowships Call for 2016

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is an agency mandated by an act of Parliament (Act no 23 of 1998), for the implementation of human capital development initiatives, knowledge production and the provisioning of research infrastructure. Through the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the NRF receives funding in order to fulfil its mandate and vision. The National Research and Development Strategy of 2002 identified the need for a new generation of scientists to underpin the central thrust of innovation. The South African research and academic system is faced with a challenge of having an ageing productive scientific population. Strategic interventions are needed to reverse these trends in order to ensure correct positioning of the country for competing in the global research and innovation arena. In response, the NRF commits an annual investment towards the development of postdoctoral fellows in order to promote research and research capacity development in all knowledge fields, including innovation and technology, through the NRF's Freestanding Postdoctoral Research Fellowships.

The funding instrument supports appropriately qualified postdoctoral research fellows who wish to pursue research at publicly funded South African Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), Science Councils and National Research Facilities. The objectives of the NRF Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowships funding instrument are to:

- Increase the number and quality of postdoctoral research fellows in South Africa;
- Enable South African postdoctoral fellows to obtain international research exposure; and
- Encourage outstanding international postdoctoral research fellows to undertake research in South Africa.

1. Areas of support

Applications from candidates intending to pursue postdoctoral research in the following specific areas will be considered:

- Science
- Engineering

- Technology (SET)
- Social Sciences; and
- Humanities

In allocating fellowship funds, priority will be given to Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines. The percentage of fellowships awarded towards the SET domain will be between 70 – 80%; and 20 – 30% for Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

2. Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will apply:

- Fellowships are open to South African citizens and permanent residents who would like to undertake research at a public research institution in South Africa;
- Fellowships are also open to outstanding international candidates from outside South Africa, who wish to undertake postdoctoral research in South Africa;
- Applicants must have obtained their PhD within 5 (five) years of submitting an application to the NRF;
- Applicants who are currently completing their Doctoral dissertation for submission may apply however, **awards that are not taken up by 30 September 2016 will be automatically cancelled by the NRF;**
- Applicants who are applying for a third postdoctoral research placement are not eligible;
- Full- time employees of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) are not eligible to apply;
- Fellowships will preferably be awarded to individuals that intend to expand their research experience by undertaking research on a new research project; in a different department; or at a different institution to that where the previous study was undertaken; and
- Special consideration will be given to applicants where the individual's research training and outputs may be enhanced by continuing with postdoctoral research at the same institution; department; or under the same mentor. In such instances the applicant must provide a **strong motivation** describing the benefits to the applicant and for advancing research and innovation.

3. Value of the Fellowship

Successful applicants will receive funding for a maximum period of three (3) years. The Fellowship package for 2016 is broken down as follows:

R155 000 per annum	non-taxable stipend
R45 000 per annum	contribution towards research costs
R15 000 per annum	compulsory institutional contribution

Host institutions will be expected to supplement the fellowship with a minimum of R15 000.00 per annum as part of the institutional commitment. In addition, the host institutions will ensure the provision of an enabling environment for fellows' research training and skills development.

Successful candidates are also eligible for a once-off travel grant of up to R15 000, for local travel, and up to R45 000, international travel. The travel grants may be used to contribute towards the costs of attending local or international conferences; workshops; visiting a laboratory or; any other activity that supports the beneficiaries' research training. This is the maximum amount permitted over the tenure of the fellowship. Postdoctoral fellows who wish to access the travel grant must complete a travel grant application form provided by their university postgraduate office/research office for submission and approval by the NRF.

4. Conditions of the Fellowship

- The fellowship shall be held as the primary funding for the postdoctoral research training;
- Fellowships may not be held simultaneously with a fellowship from any other government or NRF source or NRF administered source;
- Postdoctoral fellows are permitted to spend a maximum of 20% of their time undertaking lecturing and student supervision;
- Postdoctoral fellows may not concurrently hold the fellowship with any full-time employment position; and

- Postdoctoral fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to the institutional capped value.

5. Equity and redress

In line with the national imperative of equity and redress, the bursary scheme prioritises support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups *viz.* black, female and persons with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the NRF merit review and selection criteria are supported. The set equity targets are 80% blacks, 50% women and 4% students with disabilities.

With respect to citizenship of successful applicants, the awards will be allocated in line with the following percentages:

- 84% to South African citizens and permanent residents; and
- 5% Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries
- 4% Other African countries
- 4% Non-African

6. Application process

Applicants may apply by following the steps below:

- Applications must be submitted through an online application process to the NRF.
- Applicants must apply for the NRF Free-standing-Scarce Skills-Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for 2016 by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>.

On accessing the link, please follow the instructions as follows:

- Register/Login using your Identity (ID) or passport number and password.
- Select “My Applications”.
- Select “Create Application”.
- Select the call for which you are applying: **NRF Free-standing-Scarce Skills-Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for 2016.**

- Select “Apply now”.
- Complete all compulsory and non-compulsory (CV) sections of the application form.
- Please attach the necessary documents in **one PDF file in the following order: ID document, proof of permanent residence (if applicable) and certified copies of Masters or Doctoral certificates (if available)**. Should you not follow the guidelines for attaching the necessary documents, your application will not be considered.
- Remember to submit your application on completion.

Please note the following:

- Complete applications will automatically be forwarded to the host Institution for verification before being submitted to the NRF for further processing.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered.
- Contact the university postgraduate or research office for queries related to institutional processes and deadlines.
- NRF contact persons are listed below for NRF related enquiries.
- The closing date for submitting applications is **01 September 2015**.

7. Review process

After the closing date for the submission of applications, all eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive merit review process. Any information submitted as attachments that should have been completed as part of the application renders the application incomplete resulting in a rejection. All applications considered will be evaluated in a competitive merit review process. The reviewers are selected by the NRF staff from database existing databases and other sources and may include the reviewers suggested by the applicant's. The applications are sent to reviewers before the panel. In assessing the proposals, the reviewers' reports are referred to, and agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard during the panel.

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications in order to determine applicants that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding are evaluated according to the predetermined criteria.

Each area is given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used as well as their relative weighting.

Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Postdoctoral fellowships

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weight (Total = 100%)
Track Record of Applicant	Applicant expertise/training that will enable the applicant to successfully undertake the proposed research.	10%
	The applicant's research track record which could include peer reviewed publications, conference proceedings, research prizes and awards.	10%
Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research	Literature review with citations, significance of the research in terms of the problem statement, aims and objectives. Scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge to be generated.	20%
	Research design, methodology developed to address aims of the research. Provision of workplan and feasible timelines and milestones for the research.	20%
	Alignment with national and institutional research priorities.	5%
Institutional Support	Institutional support for the postdoctoral fellowship through infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.	10%
Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research	Details of envisaged realistic outputs of the research such as publications, conference proceedings, toolkits, policy documents.	5%
	Contribution to postdoctoral research skills development in a priority research area (human capacity development of the applicant)	10%
	Potential for socio-economic impact of the research in South Africa	10%
		100%

8. Reporting

For continuous monitoring of progress, the awardees will be required to submit an Annual Progress Report (APR), in a format provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Conditions of Grant.

9. NRF contact persons

For NRF Online application and grants management related enquiries, please contact:

Ms Zikhona Lose

Professional Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)

Telephone: 012 481 4365. E-mail: zikhona.lose@nrf.ac.za

For funding instrument related enquiries, please contact:

Ms Nompumelelo Thwala

Professional Officer: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development (HICD)

Telephone: 012 481 4232. E-mail: nompumelelo.thwala@nrf.ac.za