



RISA

Research and Innovation
Support and Advancement

**DST – NRF FELLOWSHIPS FOR EARLY CAREER
RESEARCHERS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM**

FRAMEWORK

Directorate: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development

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Table of Contents

1. Background.....	3
2. Rationale	4
3. Objectives.....	4
4. Fields of Study	5
5. Eligibility	5
6. Application Requirements.....	6
7. Application Process.....	6
8. Selection Criteria	6
9. Conditions of Award.....	7
10. Value of the Fellowship	8
11. Reporting.....	8

1. Background

The core mandate of the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF) is to promote and support research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of research. In order to achieve this mandate, the Department of Science and Technology (DST), through the NRF has made significant investment towards supporting “next generation” and “emerging researchers.” This is in line with the targets set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030.

South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK) signed a bilateral agreement on science and technology in 1995, and have been working together since then in areas such as climate change, biotechnology and astronomy. The Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society of the United Kingdom (UK) of Great Britain and Ireland (the UK Academies) and the National Research Foundation of South Africa (SA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the United Kingdom-South Africa Newton Fund in September 2014, with the aim of developing scientific capacity and long-term sustainable economic growth.

This will be achieved through:

- i. Research capacity building by assisting partners to undertake and disseminate scientific research; and
- ii. Broader scientific capacity building by supporting the ability of developing countries to both engage with and make proper use of research and other outputs of science.

The UK-SA Newton Fund is administered by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the South African DST while the programme activities are managed by a core group of UK and SA delivery partners. The partners allocate funding through competitive processes which are open to all eligible parties and assessed against set criteria.

The DST-NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK were established under the ‘research capacity building’ strand, and are a partnership between the NRF and prominent UK academies (*i.e.* the Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, and the Royal Society).

The aim of the fellowships is to develop science and innovation partnerships through building research and innovation capacity. The fellowships will facilitate the placement of UK early career researchers (with up to seven years post-PhD experience) at South African public research institutions for a minimum period of three (3) months and a maximum period of six (6) months, in order to enhance and strengthen collaboration, build research capacity and enhance career opportunities for researchers in SA and the UK.

2. Rationale

International strategic partnerships remain the vehicle for development within the context of the advancement of research and human capacity development. In a globalised world, researcher collaborations are critical for the competitiveness of any country. While international collaboration has always been an intrinsic part of the research and innovation (R&I) endeavour, the forces of competitiveness and globalisation are accelerating the scope, pace and importance of cross-border R&I, strengthened by directed partnerships both within and outside of SA. Stakeholders around the world are working to internationalise their R&I efforts, driven by the need to establish a competitive reputation, to access global knowledge and expertise, and to mobilise new resources.

The fellowships will facilitate the fostering of long-term relations between UK early career researchers and the South African research base through interactions and embarking on research activities of mutual interest leading to improved access to international centres of excellence for UK-based researchers as well as their South African counterparts.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the fellowships are:

- To promote the engagement of UK fellows across all disciplines of the physical, natural and social sciences, clinical and patient oriented research as well as the humanities, with South African researchers;
- To provide an opportunity for post-doctoral researchers at an early career stage from the UK to work at a South African research institution for a period from three (3) to six (6) months;

- To foster long-term relations between UK early career researchers and the South African research base through interactions, embarking on research activities of mutual interest leading to improved access to international centres of excellence for UK-based researchers as well as their South African counterparts;
- To foster collaboration in order to improve the quality of research outputs by UK and South African researchers;
- To contribute to capacity building of early and established researchers in South Africa and the UK; and
- To enhance networking within the UK and South African science systems.

4. Fields of Study

The research may be undertaken in all the disciplines covered by the academies namely the physical, natural, social sciences and the humanities as well as clinical and patient oriented research.

A total of 45 fellows will be supported over a three (3) year period, from 2015 to 2017. For this particular call twenty (20) grants are available to be awarded as follows:

- Nine (9) fellowships in the Natural Sciences and Engineering;
- Three (3) fellowships in patient-oriented research; and
- Eight (8) fellowships in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

5. Eligibility

The applicant must:

- Have completed a Doctoral degree;
- Have no more than seven (7) years of active full time postdoctoral experience at the time of application. This period is discounting career breaks, but including teaching experience and/or time spent in industry;
- Be based at a UK government funded University or research institute; and
- Have a clearly defined and mutually-beneficial research proposal agreed to with a South African host researcher.

6. Application Requirements

Applicants must provide an official letter of invitation and support from a South African research host.

An official letter must clearly demonstrate;

- the alignment of the fellow's proposed research with the host's research expertise; and
- the availability of research running costs, laboratory and office space as well as office and laboratory equipment for the fellow's stay.

Applicants must provide an official letter confirming affiliation to a UK government funded University or research institution.

7. Application Process

The NRF will invite applications from fellows who wish to be part of a programme that will support the placement of UK early career researchers (with up to seven (7) years post-PhD experience) at South African public research institutions for a period of three (3) to six (6) months.

Applications will be submitted *via* the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>. Further instructions on the application process will be made available in the DST – NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK *Funding and Application Guide for Applications*.

8. Selection Criteria

Applications that meet the eligibility criteria, and that are completed appropriately, will be subjected to a competitive merit review process. An independent and external review committee will consider all applications and recommend applications for awards to the NRF. The reviewers are selected by the NRF from existing reviewer databases and other sources. The UK academies may also submit names of potential reviewers to the NRF. Selection criteria will be based on agreed assessment criteria in the form of a scorecard below.

Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for DST – NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK

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,	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.	20%
	Research design, methodology developed to address aims of the research.	20%
	Alignment with national (at applicant's home country) and institutional research priorities (at host institution).	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%
Total		100%

9. Conditions of Award

Successful applicants who are offered the fellowship are required to complete and sign the NRF Conditions of Grant document that will be forwarded at the time of award.

10. Value of the Fellowship

The NRF will cover the costs of the cheapest economy return flight from the UK to South Africa as well as living expenses including accommodation and ground transport.

The duration of the fellowship will be between three (3) to six (6) months. The minimum amount per fellowship is R165 000 all inclusive, and the maximum amount per fellowship is R330 000 all inclusive. The value of each fellowship will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for living expenses and ground transport, based on the duration of the research stay in South Africa. **Due to the limited number of fellowships available, no follow up visits will be allowed under this scheme.**

11. Reporting

For evaluation of the funding instrument, the fellows will be required to submit an exit report to the NRF upon completion of the fellowship, on their overall experience, achievements and outputs as well as any future plans for collaborations. The format of the exit report will be provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the Application Form and the signed Conditions of Grant.

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