Grants Management and Systems Administration
NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship Application and Funding Guide 2018
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## List of Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>APR</th>
<th>Annual Progress Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Designated Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMSA</td>
<td>Grants Management and Systems Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HICD</td>
<td>Human and Institutional Capacity Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISA</td>
<td>Research and Innovation Support and Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td>National Research Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWAS</td>
<td>The World Academy of Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contact Details

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

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E-mail: zodwa.mahlangu@nrf.ac.za

For funding instrument related enquiries, please contact:

Ms Maphuti Madiga
Professional Officer: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development (HICD).
Telephone: 012 481 4150
E-mail: maphuti.madiga@nrf.ac.za

Application and funding guidelines are explained in this document. Candidates must read this document together with the call or framework document of the funding instrument that highlights the funding instrument eligibility criteria and requirements.

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours from 08:00 to 16:30 Monday to Friday.

Tel: 012-481 4034

E-mail: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za
1. Introduction
This Guide provides an overview of the NRF-TWAS (The World Academy of Science) Postdoctoral Fellowship funding instrument, its application and funding guidelines and processes. It should be read in conjunction with the NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowships Framework Document, which can be accessed at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. The Framework Document provides detailed information with respect to objectives of the funding instrument, eligibility criteria etc. This document does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

2. Granting Rules

2.1. Conditions of the NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral 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 TWAS, South African government 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 in South Africa;
- Postdoctoral fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to the institutional capped value;
- Successful applicants must provide a written undertaking to return to their home country upon completion of the fellowship;
- Postdoctoral fellows will be required to submit Annual Progress Reports (APR) in a format provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Conditions of Grant;
- All fellows will be required, to submit an exit report to the NRF - TWAS, upon completion of their Postdoctoral research, on their overall experience, achievements and outputs;
- Successful applicants must have all foreign qualifications (obtained from non-South African universities) evaluated by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). A SAQA evaluation certificate must be submitted with the application, if available. If not available, the proof that SAQA evaluation has been applied for must be attached. The applicants will nonetheless need to provide proof of SAQA accreditation before they can register at most South African institutions;
- Successful applicants will be required to meet the following requirements of the English Language Proficiency Academic test:
  - IELTS 6.5 (no band less than 6.0); or TOEFL (paper) 575 (TWE 4.5); or TOEFL iBIT (min. 20); or Cambridge minimum 58. Information on the IELTS tests can be obtained from the British Council in
home country or accessed on: www.ielts.org. Further information on the TOEFL test can be accessed on: www.toefl.com. Consult the British Council in the home country for assistance. This certificate is a requirement even if all degrees were taken in English.

- **Awards that are not taken up by 30 June 2018 will be automatically cancelled by the NRF.**

### 2.2. Value of the NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship

The duration of postdoctoral fellowships will be for a minimum of six (6) months and a maximum of two (2) years. For fellowships with a duration of six (6) months to twelve (12) months, stipends and research costs will be paid on a pro-rata basis depending on the duration of the fellowship.

The breakdown of the award will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of support</th>
<th>Value (Rand)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stipend</td>
<td>255 000</td>
<td>Per Annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Costs</td>
<td>50 000</td>
<td>Per Annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory institutional contribution</td>
<td>15 000</td>
<td>Per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost towards mobility of the fellow</td>
<td>15 000</td>
<td>Once off, per single economy airfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

The costs for the mobility of the fellow will include the following:

- Travel visa and study visa subject to submission of proof of expenditure;
- A single economy airfare for travel from the fellows’ home country to South Africa to the maximum value of R15 000; and
- A single economy airfare from South Africa to the fellow’s home country, upon completion of the postdoctoral research fellowship, to the maximum value of R15 000.

Postdoctoral fellows that take up the fellowship for more than one year, are also eligible for a once-off travel grant of up to R25 000, for local travel, and up to R50 000, for 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 available on the NRF Online Submission System.

3. Application Process
The NRF is issuing this call for NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship applications that is published on the NRF website and is accessible online at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. The NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship funding instrument will not accept more than one application per applicant per year. All applications must be duly authorised and approved by the Designated Authority (DA) of the research administration at the institution that submits the application. Applications will be automatically routed to the institutional DA of the submitting institution for validation at the deadline date determined by individual institutions. Applicants have to enquire with their institutions regarding internal closing dates. The processing of a successful grant application takes approximately five (5) months from the time of submission until the commencement of funding.

4. How to Submit Applications
Applications may be completed on the NRF Online Submission System at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. Applicants are advised to complete their applications soon after the call is open to prevent IT system overload nearer the closing date of 06 July 2017.
Step 1: This is an electronic submission system and applicants must be registered on the system in order to create and complete an application. If you had previously registered and submitted an application on the NRF Online System (http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za) before February 2012 and your application was not successful, your details would have been migrated to the new NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za). If you experience problems accessing the system with your NRF Online password, use the Reset Password button. If you are not yet registered on the NRF Online Submission System, you must register to access the application form.

Most application screens have application specific instructions to help you work through the section. Please read the instruction carefully before completing the section.
Step 2: Once you have logged onto the NRF Online Submission System, you will get to the ‘landing page’ where you will find a menu at the top left side of your screen (tab indicated with blue arrow). To create a new application, click on My Applications-CREATE Application.
Step 3: Select the funding call for which you are applying on the create application screen and a new application will open to complete. Please note that this must be selected only once. To continue working on an application, go to My Applications - List of Applications

Create Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Open Date</th>
<th>Closing Date</th>
<th>Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Skies Concept Notes 2018</td>
<td>03 April 2017</td>
<td>12 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Skies Concept Notes 2018</td>
<td>03 April 2017</td>
<td>12 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSIR National Laser Centre Rental Pool Programme 2016</td>
<td>19 April 2017</td>
<td>28 February 2018</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DST-NRF Collaborative Postgraduate Training Call for 2018</td>
<td>28 February 2017</td>
<td>28 April 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>DST-NRF Professional Development Programme (PDP) Call for 2016</td>
<td>08 February 2016</td>
<td>29 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension Bursary Support for Masters and Doctoral Studies 2015</td>
<td>01 January 2015</td>
<td>26 December 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational Biodiversity Information Programme (FBIP) - Small Grants 2017</td>
<td>29 March 2017</td>
<td>07 June 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Knowledge Systems Call 2015</td>
<td>18 June 2014</td>
<td>01 August 2214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Funding Instruments in support of the National Equipment Programme (NEP) 2017</td>
<td>08 March 2016</td>
<td>30 September 2017</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge, Interchange and Collaboration (KIC) 2017 - Round 1</td>
<td>24 March 2017</td>
<td>21 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research Foundation / European Research Council 2017 Call</td>
<td>20 March 2017</td>
<td>12 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominations of Academic Staff: Sabbatical Grants for Completion of Doctoral Degrees 2018</td>
<td>03 April 2017</td>
<td>10 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman/South Africa Research Cooperation Programme 2018</td>
<td>27 February 2017</td>
<td>28 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa – Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (SA-JINR) – Mobility Grants for Researchers and Postgraduate Students 2017</td>
<td>11 April 2017</td>
<td>30 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP) 2018</td>
<td>03 April 2017</td>
<td>26 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing BW</td>
<td>26 March 2017</td>
<td>22 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuthuka 2018</td>
<td>03 April 2017</td>
<td>19 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuthuka 2018</td>
<td>03 April 2017</td>
<td>24 May 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Grants Setup Testing</td>
<td>10 April 2017</td>
<td>30 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAT of Postdoc application</td>
<td>19 April 2017</td>
<td>24 April 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Applicants are urged to complete or update ALL screens of the CV, including the Research Profile and Research Outputs as this information is evaluated in the review process and will impact on the overall assessment of your application.
Step 4: All sections marked with a red asterisk are compulsory sections in the application. These sections must be completed in order for the final submit button to appear. The sections without asterisks are non-compulsory sections. You may enter information in these sections, if you have information to enter, such as research outputs. Completed sections will be indicated by a green tick on the main menu, while incomplete sections will have a yellow cross. Please ensure that once you complete information in a section, press the “save” button before returning to the main menu.

All compulsory sections will guide you with error messages at the top of the screen. Please follow these messages to help you complete the section correctly.
Step 5: The *Type of Fellowship* section is a compulsory section. Please follow the instructions below:

- Please select “Postdoctoral Fellowship – local” as you will be conducting research at a South African institution.
- Please **do not** select “Postdoctoral Fellowship – abroad” or “DST-NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK”.

![Type of Fellowship](image)
Step 6: The *Fellowship to be Funded* section is a compulsory section. The dropdown list for *Fellowship for which you are applying*, will have three options: (1) Postdoctoral research – local; (2) Postdoctoral research – abroad; (3) DST-NRF Fellowships for Early Career Researchers from the UK. Please select the relevant option (*see Step 5*).

Please complete the section accurately and keep the following in mind: (1) Applicants must undertake full-time Postdoctoral research. The Fellowship cannot be held concurrently with any salaried employment (2) Applicants must note that the starting date of the research must be before the deadline of 30 June 2018. Any awards not taken up by this date will be cancelled automatically.
Step 7: The Research Project Information section requires you to select the proposed institution. Once you have selected the “Postdoctoral research - local” option in the previous section, then the institutions that you can select from the dropdown list will be limited to South African institutions (including SA national facilities).

Should your institution not be on the list, please request it by selecting the support tab on the far right at the top of the screen. Please note that it is the applicant’s responsibility to find an institution and supervisor/mentor in South Africa that is willing to host them for the duration of the fellowship.
Step 8: The *Details of Research* section is one of the most important sections in the application. The section has specific instructions related to each screen. Follow the instructions to complete the section. You are required to give a concise overview about your proposed research in this section as the input is taken into consideration during the assessment of your application. Appropriate literature references must also be included. The Scorecard that will be used to assess your application can be viewed in Section 6 of this document.

*Please note that the Details of Research section will only mark as complete when all the sub-sections are completed.*
**Step 9:** The Science Engagement section is compulsory section. If you will not be running any science engagement activities, you will still have to select “add” but you can indicate “N/A” under “activity” and category.

![Science Engagement screen with instructions and a table for activities, categories, and options to add or delete]
Step 10: The Reference section allows applicants to include academic referees who can comment on the applicants’ academic abilities. On final submission of the application the emails containing a reference form are sent automatically to the nominated referees to provide a report on the academic and research capabilities of the applicant. *The applicant will have to select one Doctoral Supervisor, one Reference and one Proposed Supervisor/Host.*

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that the referee email is correct and that the referees have responded by the closing date of 06 July 2017 as this category is assessed in the application. The applicant must view the application PDF to check if a referee has responded to the request for reference. A “yes” indicates a response and a “no” indicates no response from the referee.
**Step 11**: The *Possible Reviewers* section is compulsory in this Call. The section requires that you add the names of possible reviewers in your field of research that you have interacted with through conferences or other academic fora, to provide a neutral review of your proposed research project. A minimum of six (6) and a maximum of ten (10) possible reviewers are required.
Step 12: *Person History* section is a section required for statistical purposes by the NRF and it allows us to ascertain who previously received NSFAS (South African National Student Financial Aid Scheme) funding.
Step 13: Attachments section - please print, certify and then scan all of the required documentation and submit as a single PDF file; then upload to the section as one document.

The following documents are compulsory:

- Copy of passport valid for the next 2 years or more i.e. 2018 onwards
- Certified copies of degree certificates for undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral studies (if Masters was upgraded to Doctoral this needs to be stated clearly in your application)
- Official letter from employer in home country providing you with the required leave in order to undertake the postdoctoral fellowship
- Official acceptance letter from the South African host institution (signed, stamped and on an official letterhead). The letter should include details of the availability of specialised equipment, infrastructure and resources to enable the fellow to conduct their research.
- SAQA certificate (if this is not yet available, proof that SAQA evaluation has been applied for has to be attached)
- English Language Proficiency Test results (if available)
- If you are a fellow with a disability, you must also upload a medical certificate in support of your disability
SAQA and English Proficiency certificates

Applicants who have already obtained their SAQA Evaluation and English Language Proficiency certificates must include them in the PDF file. If not already available, the two certificates can be submitted by successful applicants before taking up the awards. The funds will however not be released if the certificates, including the English certificate, are not attached. The English Proficiency Certificate is compulsory.

Applicants are advised to start this process early to allow time for processing. Information on the process can be accessed by logging on to www.saqa.org.za. On the SAQA website, navigate to Service - Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications - General Information. Applicants must strictly adhere to all the instructions and provide all applicable documents to avoid delays and rejection of applications. Applicants are advised to courier all application documents to SAQA directly.

The following requirements of the English Language Proficiency Academic test:

- IELTS 6.5 (no band less than 6.0); or TOEFL (paper) 575 (TWE 4.5); or TOEFL iBIT (min. 20); or Cambridge minimum 58. Information on the IELTS tests can be obtained from the British Council in home country or accessed on: www.ielts.org. Further information on the TOEFL test can be accessed on: www.toefl.com. Consult the British Council in the home country for assistance. This certificate is a requirement even if all degrees were taken in English.

*Please note that should any of the required documents not be uploaded to the application, the application will be rejected without review.*
Step 14: Applicants must ensure that they adhere to their institution’s internal closing date for submission of their application to allow for internal institutional screening and review. The internal closing date will be determined by the respective research offices or Post Graduate Office and is usually at least two weeks prior to the NRF’s closing date.

Designated Authorities (DAs) at institutions ensure that all proposals are screened and approved through internal institutional processes before submitting applications to the NRF. The NRF assumes that the respective DAs are satisfied with the standard of all proposals validated and submitted, and that the institution approves and supports the proposed research.

Step 15: The final submit button will appear only if all compulsory sections are complete. Press OK to submit your application. If all the compulsory sections are complete and the final submit button does not appear, select any section and resave to refresh the application; you will then see the final submit button. A submitted application is automatically routed to the DA in the Research Office of the institution that you selected, for internal review and validation. Late applications, additional supporting documentation or information received after the closing date will not be accepted or considered.

The NRF will not process applications that are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect detail, or fail to comply with instruction. Such applications will be rejected. The application must be completed in sufficient detail to allow for a comprehensive review and evaluation by external reviewers. In addition to the electronic application and required attachments, the NRF may request additional information or documentation to support an application if required. Failure to supply such information or documentation upon request may result in the rejection of the application.

5. Screening and Review Processes

5.1. Overview of the Screening Process

All applications validated by institutions and submitted to the NRF are screened by the NRF for compliance with the eligibility criteria of the Call for applications, as well as the requirements for completing the NRF Online Submission application. Applications that fail to meet the stipulated requirements will be rejected.

5.2. Overview of the Review Process

The NRF’s peer review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a review process. Applications submitted to this funding instrument will go through a panel review process.

Panel members are selected from the NRF database and other sources, which is updated on a continuous basis. When selecting the review panel, the expertise and experience of individuals in application adjudication are taken into account. In assessing the application, agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard (please refer to Section 6).
The Review Panel provides recommendations to the NRF and the final funding decision is made by the NRF taking strategic and policy objectives into consideration. In awarding grants in this funding instrument, the NRF takes into account the recommendations of the peer review panel, the objectives and targets of the funding instrument, and the available funds.

6. Ranking of Applications

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications, based on funding instrument criteria, in order to determine applications that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding are evaluated according to a number of predetermined criteria. Applications are assessed and ranked on the basis of criteria as listed in the table below. Each area may be given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used.
## Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Postdoctoral fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sub-Criteria</th>
<th>Weight (Total = 100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Track Record of Applicant</strong></td>
<td>Applicant expertise/training that will enable the applicant to successfully undertake the proposed research.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The applicant’s research track record which could include peer reviewed publications, conference proceedings, research prizes and awards.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research design, methodology developed to address aims of the research. Provision of workplan and feasible timelines and milestones for the research.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alignment with national and institutional research priorities.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Support</strong></td>
<td>Institutional support for the Postdoctoral fellowship through infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research</strong></td>
<td>Details of envisaged realistic outputs of the research such as publications, conference proceedings, toolkits, policy documents.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contribution to Postdoctoral research skills development in a priority research area (human capacity development of the applicant)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potential for socio-economic impact of the research in South Africa</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total

100%
7. Application Feedback and Disputes

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the recommended funding decision has been approved by the NRF, the NRF will publish a list of successful applications on the NRF website, www.nrf.ac.za/bursaries/calls. Thereafter, successful applicants will receive a letter of award. The application status online will not indicate whether or not the application has been approved for funding. **This funding instrument does not provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants;** if your name does not appear on the published list of successful applications it means that your application was unsuccessful.

An unsuccessful applicant who requires feedback is advised to contact their institutional office to request feedback from the NRF. The NRF does not provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants due to the high volume of applicants within this funding instrument.

8. Change Requests

8.1. Prior Approval Requests

Applicants must submit all change requests in writing to the NRF for approval before effecting any changes. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office for approval prior to the change.

8.2. Changes in Project Scope, Supervisor or Institution

Changes may occur where a project scope, host or institution needs to be changed from the original research proposal, host or institution respectively. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office. Such requests must be forwarded to the NRF 30 days before the change is intended to take place.

*This does not apply when the fellow has completed their research at the institution and wishes to change the project/supervisor/institutions. In this case, the fellow has to complete an exit report and any remaining funds will have to be returned to the NRF.*

9. Scientific Compliance

9.1. Methodology

The fellow takes scientific responsibility for the research to be undertaken, including its objectives and the methodology outlined in the project proposal. The student is required to devote the necessary time to the research project in compliance with the work-plan for the research proposal approved by the NRF so as to achieve the project’s stated aims and objectives.
9.2. Intellectual Property Rights

The intellectual capital generated by NRF funded research must be appropriately protected and exploited for the benefit of South Africa. This condition should not interfere with the Intellectual Property Rights arrangements already made, on condition that the majority of the benefits arising from the intellectual capital accrue to South Africa and its citizens. This condition is aligned with the Intellectual Property Rights Act, which will override this condition of grant.

9.3. Ethics

The fellow is required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards in conducting the research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It remains the responsibility of the project leader to comply with all relevant regulations in this regard, including those of the institution at which the research is carried out. An ethical clearance certificate (where applicable) must be submitted to the NRF in respect of successful applications before funding can be released.

10. References