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# **NRF-Nuffic Doctoral Scholarships Framework**

**Directorate: Human and Infrastructure Capacity  
Development (HICD)**

**Date: March 2018**

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## 1. Background

South Africa aspires to produce more doctoral graduates as a means of increasing its global competitiveness, high-level research skills and knowledge production. One way to achieve this is by creating international partnerships and networks between scientists and research institutions, with a focus on training doctoral students. The National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa has a mandate to promote and support research through funding, human capital development and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure. In order to realise this mandate, the NRF has made a substantial commitment and investment towards supporting the next generation of researchers to intensify and strengthen African and global networks.

In recognition of the long standing collaboration between South Africa and the Netherlands in education and research, and with the ambition to strengthen postgraduate training while enhancing sustainable collaboration between South African and Dutch higher education institutions (HEIs), an agreement was signed in 2017 between the NRF and Nuffic (Netherlands organisation for internationalisation in education represented locally in South Africa by Nuffic's Netherlands Education Support Office). This agreement is an *implementing arrangement* under the *Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the fields of science and technology* between the governments of South Africa and the Netherlands (2015).

Some of the relevant highlights of the cooperation between South Africa and the Netherlands include the South Africa Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD), that ran from 1997 to 2013 and the Desmond Tutu Training Programme (DTTP) that commenced in 2009. The DTTP was jointly established by the NRF and Vrije University Amsterdam (VUA) to enable the training of doctoral candidates under the supervision of the VUA researchers and their South African counterparts. Following the signing of individual agreements between VUA and several South African universities, the awarding of joint doctoral degrees in South Africa was made possible. Eleven South African universities namely, Stellenbosch University; North-West University; and the Universities of the Western Cape; Cape Town; Pretoria; South Africa; Witwatersrand, Free State; KwaZulu-Natal; and Johannesburg have collaborative agreements with VUA for postgraduate training in place.

Through this new partnership between the NRF and Nuffic, doctoral scholarships will be provided for South African citizens and permanent residents to study full-time in the Netherlands (i.e. single site mode). Institutional level agreements between Dutch HEIs and

Partner Institutions in South Africa to enable full-time joint doctoral degrees will also be supported (i.e. split site mode).

The roles of the NRF and Nuffic are described in detail in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). Briefly, the NRF bears responsibility for the implementation of the scholarship programme, through *inter alia* publishing the call and managing the application and selection processes. Nuffic will act as the coordinator between the Dutch<sup>1</sup> HEIs and the NRF, to promote the programmes among various stakeholders and facilitate links between researchers in the two countries. This framework document may be amended periodically to ensure synergy with the NRF and Nuffic postgraduate funding policies.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this funding instrument are to:

- Strengthen cooperation and internationalisation between Dutch HEIs and Partner Institutions in South Africa through joint supervision of South African doctoral candidates;
- Foster sustainable institutional collaboration between South African and Dutch HEIs, contributing to the bilateral research agendas;
- Promote and advance science, research and innovation;
- Support the development of a critical mass of globally competitive knowledge-workers in South Africa in prioritised areas;
- Contribute towards increasing the number and quality of South African postgraduate students in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering, (iii) Technology, (iv) the Social Sciences and (v) Humanities; and
- Effect transformation in the percentage representation of postgraduate students from designated groups, namely black, female and persons with disabilities.

## 3. Doctoral Training Modalities

The two modalities of doctoral training that will be funded are (i) full-time doctoral studies at a Dutch HEI, referred to as the single site mode, and (ii) full-time doctoral studies jointly

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<sup>1</sup> See Annexure 1 for a list of participating Dutch Higher Education Institutions.

developed and implemented by a Dutch HEI and a Partner University in South Africa, referred to as the split-site mode and resulting in a joint degree<sup>2</sup> from the partner institutions.

## 4. Areas of Support

The scholarship is intended to support doctoral candidates to pursue research studies in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering (iii) Technology, (iv) the Social Sciences and (v) Humanities, at universities in participating countries. The percentage of supported students will be 80% from the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and 20% from the Social Sciences and Humanities, in line with South Africa's National Development Plan. Preference will also be given to applications to obtain a Doctoral degree in a vulnerable discipline such as Statistics, Mathematics and Nursing, emerging research areas or where there exists a paucity of research infrastructure and/or suitably qualified supervisors in South Africa.

## 5. Eligibility

### 5.1. Institution and Supervisor Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in this doctoral training initiative, participating institutions and supervisors must meet the following requirements:

- Dutch HEIs will waive tuition fees or in the case that a tuition fee applies, this will not be charged to the NRF or the individual scholarship awardee;
- Dutch HEIs will provide research running costs (i.e. costs that can reasonably be expected to accrue during the course of the doctoral research period) and access to research infrastructure;
- Doctoral supervisory capacity must be in place at both the Dutch HEIs and the South African Partner Institution, in the case of joint degrees;
- Supervisors must commit to evaluate the academic suitability of the applicant and endorse the research proposal (including timeframes) **before** the application is

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<sup>2</sup> A joint degree in this context refers to a single doctoral degree awarded by joint decision of the Dutch HEI and Partner University in South Africa at the successful completion of a jointly defined and entirely shared doctoral study programme. This means that all Participating Institutions are responsible for the entire programme and not just their own separate parts. The offering of joint degrees is limited to institutions with existing Memoranda of Agreement for joint degrees.

submitted to the NRF for merit review. Supervisors may do this through email correspondence with the applicant and *via* other electronic media such as Skype or video conferencing;

- Supervisors must submit a letter of support indicating that the necessary research infrastructure, resources and funds for undertaking the research and supporting the doctoral student exists within their faculty/school/department. **Supervisors may only support one (1) applicant per year;**
- In the case of a joint doctoral degree;
  - A Memorandum of Agreement between the Dutch HEI and the Partner University in South Africa in respect of awarding joint degrees must be in place. Where such an agreement does not exist, a template may be requested from the NRF using the contact information provided;
  - Supervisors must also provide confirmation of a collaborative research project including a plan for co-supervision and mobility visits for the duration of the four (4)-year doctoral study.

## 5.2. Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be South African citizens or permanent residents with a SA ID number, although South African citizens will be prioritised;
- Not hold this scholarship concurrently with any other NRF or South African/Netherlands government scholarship;
- Provide a Master's degree certificate or an official document from the university certifying that all requirements for the Master's degree have been met and that they will be graduating;
- Be intending to pursue full-time doctoral studies; and
- Not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the award. However, successful applicants may undertake a maximum of 12 hours of teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstration duties, per week on average, during the year of study and may be remunerated for these duties, provided that they are reimbursed at a rate not exceeding the normal tariff of the institution for services rendered.

## 6. Application Process

Applications for funding in 2018 must be submitted through the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>. Further instructions on the application process are available in the NRF-Nuffic Doctoral Scholarships Application and Funding Guide for 2018 which must be read in conjunction with this framework document.

## 7. Attachments

Applicants will be required to attach the following documents, in PDF format:

- Certified copy of identity document. or proof of South African permanent residence (if applicable);
- Certified academic record or, in the case of applicants with outstanding fees owed to the university, an official (i.e. stamped and signed) statement confirming that the transcript is not issued due to outstanding fees owed to the university;
- Proof of, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding for applicants that have indicated that they were previously funded by NSFAS or, University Financial Aid funding for other financially needy students;
- Provisional letter of acceptance for doctoral studies at the Dutch HEI and South African university in the case of a joint degree; and
- A medical certificate from applicants with disabilities, specifying the nature of the disability.

## 8. Selection Criteria

Applications will be adjudicated by a virtual review panel consisting of South African and Dutch experts in the various fields, which may include representatives of The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the Dutch National Research Council and Nuffic. The selection of successful candidates will be informed by the merit review, priority areas for doctoral training, NRF equity targets and financial need. Financially needy applicants will be those who were previously funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and/or University Financial Aid. This does not exclude applicants who were not previously funded by NSFAS and/or University Financial Aid from receiving postgraduate funding from the NRF. The following will be considered in evaluating all applications in a competitive merit review process (see Table 1 for the scorecard):

- Rationale and literature review;
- Aims and objectives;
- Methodology and proposed research plan;
- Anticipated outputs;
- Potential Impact;
- Alignment with South African National Research Priorities;
- Motivation explaining the benefits of undertaking the doctoral studies abroad and reasons why the doctoral studies cannot be undertaken in South Africa under the supervision of South African-based researchers alone.

**Table 1: Scorecard for the assessment of proposals for Doctoral Scholarships**

Criteria	Description	Weight
<b>Rationale and Literature</b>	Description of rationale including a literature review with references.	20%
<b>Aims and Objectives</b>	Description of the aims and objectives of the study.	10%
<b>Methodology and proposed research plan</b>	Research methodology, work plan and project organisation.	20%
<b>Anticipated outputs</b>	Anticipated realistic outputs of the research such as publications, poster and/or oral conference presentation.	10%
<b>Potential impact</b>	Potential for socio-economic impact of the research in South Africa. In addition, applicants must demonstrate the novelty and scientific contribution to new knowledge. Where applicable multi-disciplinary aspect of the project must be described.	10%
<b>Alignment with National Research Strategies</b>	Alignment with one or more National Research Strategies.	10%
<b>Motivation</b>	Explain the benefits of undertaking doctoral studies abroad and reasons why the doctoral studies cannot be undertaken in South Africa.	10%
<b>Academic Merit</b>	The NRF defines high academic achievement at the Masters level as a first class pass (75% and above or cum laude in cases where a grade is not indicated). Exceptional achievement is further demonstrated by evidence of research outputs such as publications and presentation at local and international conferences.	10%
		<b>100%</b>

Selection criteria will include academic merit, financial need, a strong motivation for studying abroad, research ability, leadership qualities (as articulated in the applicant's personal profile), previous awards, prizes and honours. It is also based on the feasibility and merit of the

applicant's research project proposal. The scorecard to be used in the assessment of all applications is presented in Table 1 above.

## 9. Scholarship Details

The scholarships are designed for students enrolled in a full-time, four (4)-year doctoral degree in either single or split site mode. The Dutch HEI will waive tuition, provide research running costs<sup>3</sup> and access to research infrastructure. Costs that will be covered by the NRF are detailed in Tables 2 and 3 below and are in alignment with NRF scholarships and bursaries which may be adjusted from time to time. With respect to the single site mode, the NRF provides **an economy airfare for the student**, valid for not more than one (1) year, to and from the Netherlands and, the scholarship value for subsistence and health insurance based on minimum requirements set by the Dutch government. International visits funded in the split site mode will be for a maximum of three (3) months annually over the four (4)-year period of study.

**Table 2: Scholarship values for NRF-Nuffic Doctoral Scholarships in the Netherlands (single site mode)**

	Amount (€) <sup>4</sup>				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Grand Total
<b>Scholarship (subsistence)</b>	15 000	15 000	15 000	15 000	60 000
<b>Health insurance</b>	1 310	1 310	1 310	1 310	5 240
<b>Airfare (single economy)</b>	800			800	1 600
<b>Visa</b>	300				300
<b>Mobility allowance</b>	0				0
<b>Total</b>	17 410	16 310	16 310	17 110	67 140
	(R261 150)	(R244 650)	(R244 650)	(R256 650)	(R1 007 100)

<sup>3</sup> Research running costs refer to costs that can reasonably be expected to accrue during the course of the research period.

<sup>4</sup> All costs are based on 2018 figures given by the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND). Visit [www.ind.nl](http://www.ind.nl) for VISA and [www.belastingdienst.nl](http://www.belastingdienst.nl) for insurance. The exchange rate calculated on 15 February 2018 was R15.00 to €1.

**Table 3: Scholarship values for NRF-Nuffic Doctoral Scholarships in the Netherlands and South Africa (split site mode)**

	Amount (€)				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Grand Total
<b>Local South African Scholarship</b>	7 500	7 500	7 500	7 500	30 000
<b>Return airfare</b>	1 600	1 600	1 600	1 600	6 400
<b>Visa</b>	300	300	300	300	1 200
<b>Mobility allowance</b>	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	14 000
<b>Total</b>	12 900 (R193 500)	12 900 (R193 500)	12 900 (R193 500)	12 900 (R193 500)	51 600 (R774 000)

## 10. Award Principles

The scholarship is awarded through an annual grant from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) of South Africa. Given the need to transform the researcher cohort in South Africa, the Minister of Science and Technology has outlined the demographic targets for the allocation of all scholarships. The set equity targets are 80% blacks, 55% women and 4% students with disability. With respect to the nationality of foreign students pursuing doctoral studies in South Africa, 87% of funding is allocated to South Africans, 5% to students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), 4% to students from the rest of the African continent and 4% to students from non-African countries<sup>5</sup>. The application of the Ministerial guidelines is underpinned by excellence in all its dimensions. Applicants must be South African citizens or permanent residents, although South African citizens will be prioritised.

## 11. Conditions of Award

Successful applicants who are offered the scholarships by the NRF are required to complete and sign the student agreement (Conditions of Grant) that will be forwarded at the time of the

<sup>5</sup> Ministerial Guidelines on Bursaries and Fellowships, 2013

award. Successful candidates studying in the Netherlands (in single site mode) will in addition be required to give a written undertaking to return to South Africa upon completion of the doctoral studies abroad.

A list of successful candidates will be published on the NRF website as soon as the internal NRF approval processes have been finalised. The scholarship holder must obtain the degree for which the scholarship was awarded by the contractual date, which is within one (1) year after NRF funding has ceased and notify the NRF *via* the relevant university authority, unless otherwise approved by the NRF in writing.

## **12. Reporting**

For continuous funding and monitoring of the funding instrument, the scholarship holders will be required to submit Progress Reports (PRs) in a format provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed NRF Scholarship Agreement. The NRF will release the scholarships for continuing students, subsequent to the submission of the PR. The NRF may, in consultation with the grant holder's research office or relevant university authority, request interim progress reports for the purpose of implementing corrective measures timeously to ensure that the stated objectives are met within the stipulated timeframes.

The NRF standard practice is to support all eligible continuing students, aligned to the NRF maximum period of support for the level of study, in order to enable them to complete their postgraduate degree.

## **13. Financial Control**

The financial administration of the scholarship is performed through the NRF Grants Management and System Administration (GMSA) Directorate. Students that will be registered at a Dutch HEI (i.e. the single site mode) only, will receive their award directly into their student account upon submission of the required written confirmations to the NRF. Scholarship holders on the joint degree programme (i.e. split site mode) will have their funds administered by the South African institution to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF. Scholarships not taken up within six (6) months of the award will be cancelled for reallocation, unless otherwise approved by the NRF.

## Annexure 1: Participating Dutch Higher Education Institutions

Institution	Field of Study / Faculty	Participating Supervisors	Contact Person
<b>1. Vrije University Amsterdam</b>	Theoretical & computational chemistry	Prof Bickelhaupt	<a href="mailto:Henk.vanden.heuvel@vu.nl">Henk.vanden.heuvel@vu.nl</a>
	Family & Child Studies, Behavioural sciences, Intellectual disabilities or visual impairments	Dr Sterkenburg & Prof Schuengel	<a href="mailto:p.s.sterkenburg@vu.nl">p.s.sterkenburg@vu.nl</a>
	Medical Centre: Infectious Diseases	Prof. van Furth	<a href="mailto:Am.vfurth@vumc.nl">Am.vfurth@vumc.nl</a>
	Food & nutrition security	Prof Remco Oostendorp,	<a href="mailto:r.oostendorp@vu.nl">r.oostendorp@vu.nl</a>
	Gender & sexuality, Sex Work, Migration, HIV/Aids, Gender and Identity	Prof Lorraine Nencel	<a href="mailto:l.s.nencel@vu.nl">l.s.nencel@vu.nl</a>
	Public Leadership, Integrity of Organisations, Public Governance & Public Control	Dr Gerda van Dijk	<a href="mailto:Gerda.van.dijk@vu.nl">Gerda.van.dijk@vu.nl</a>
	Oral Microbiology, Preventative Dentistry, Oral Ecology	Dr Crielaard	<a href="mailto:w.crielaard@acta.nl">w.crielaard@acta.nl</a>
	Biological Physics	Prof Wuite	<a href="mailto:g.j.l.wuite@vu.nl">g.j.l.wuite@vu.nl</a>
	Clinical, Neuro and Developmental Psychology	Prof Sijbrandij	<a href="mailto:e.m.sijbrandij@vu.nl">e.m.sijbrandij@vu.nl</a>
	Theology & religious studies	Dr van der Borgh	<a href="mailto:Eaig.vander.borgh@vu.nl">Eaig.vander.borgh@vu.nl</a>
	Law	Prof. Ommeren	<a href="mailto:f.j.van.ommeren@vu.nl">f.j.van.ommeren@vu.nl</a>
<b>2. Utrecht University</b>	Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	Prof Rutten and Stout	<a href="mailto:t.a.e.stout@uu.nl">t.a.e.stout@uu.nl</a>
	Faculty of Psychology	Prof Terburg, te Pas & Prof van Honk	<a href="mailto:j.vanhonk@uu.nl">j.vanhonk@uu.nl</a>
	Child Health, Diabetes, Brain, Cancer, Global Health, Infection & Immunity	Prof M.Ovaa & Prof Klipstein-Grobusch	<a href="mailto:m.ovaa@umcutrecht.nl">m.ovaa@umcutrecht.nl</a> ; <a href="mailto:k.klipstein-grobusch@umutrecht.nl">k.klipstein-grobusch@umutrecht.nl</a>
	Education, Sociology, Anthropology & interdisciplinary social sciences	Dr van Rinsum	<a href="mailto:h.i.vanrinsum@uu.nl">h.i.vanrinsum@uu.nl</a>
	Social neuroscience, neuro-endocrinology, parenting, empathy	Dr Bos	<a href="mailto:p.a.bos@uu.nl">p.a.bos@uu.nl</a>
	Dept of Language, Literature & Communication	Dr Corver & Dr van Koppen	<a href="mailto:j.m.vankoppen@uu.nl">j.m.vankoppen@uu.nl</a>
<b>3. University of Twente</b>	Faculty of Geo-Information Science; Faculty of	Prof Alfred Stein	<a href="mailto:a.stein@utwente.nl">a.stein@utwente.nl</a>

	Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences		
	Water & Climate, food security, Disaster Management, Urban Planning	Prof Rientjes	<a href="mailto:t.h.m.rientjes@utwente.nl">t.h.m.rientjes@utwente.nl</a>
	Computer Science	Prof Jaco van de Pol	<a href="mailto:j.c.vandepol@utwente.nl">j.c.vandepol@utwente.nl</a>
<b>4. ISS Erasmus University Rotterdam</b>	Law, Economics, International Development, Population Studies	Prof Wil Haut	<a href="mailto:hout@iss.nl">hout@iss.nl</a>
<b>5. Leiden university</b>	Mathematics	Marcel de Jeu	<a href="mailto:mdejeu@math.leidenuniv.nl">mdejeu@math.leidenuniv.nl</a>
<b>6. TU Delft</b>	Water management and sanitation, Health, Energy, Geosciences, Policy Analysis & Engineering	Dr Jennifer Kockx	<a href="mailto:j.p.kockx@tudelft.nl">j.p.kockx@tudelft.nl</a>
<b>7. Radboud University</b>	Anthropology, Natural resource management, land rights & reform, Civil society, Development Studies	Prof. Marja Spierenburg	<a href="mailto:m.spierenburg@maw.ru.nl">m.spierenburg@maw.ru.nl</a>
	Linguistics, Multilingualism, Language development	Prof Muysken	<a href="mailto:p.muysken@let.ru.nl">p.muysken@let.ru.nl</a>
	Radio Astronomy	Prof Falcke	<a href="mailto:h.falcke@astro.ru.nl">h.falcke@astro.ru.nl</a>
	Educational Science, Psychology, Communication Science	Prof Segers	<a href="mailto:e.segers@pwo.ru.nl">e.segers@pwo.ru.nl</a>
<b>8. Maastricht University</b>	Work & Social Psychology; Health Promotion, Social sciences, Public Health, Humanities	Prof Rob Ruiter	<a href="mailto:r.ruiter@maastrichtuniversity.nl">r.ruiter@maastrichtuniversity.nl</a>
	Life sciences, Medicine, Psychology, Economics, Law, Social Sciences	Mr Luc van den Akker	<a href="mailto:Luc.vandenakker@maastrichtuniversity.nl">Luc.vandenakker@maastrichtuniversity.nl</a>
<b>9. Groningen University</b>	Economics & Business, Science & Engineering, Philosophy. Spatial Sciences, Theology & religion, Behavioural & Social Sciences, Law, Medical Sciences, Arts	Mr Erik Haarbrink	<a href="mailto:e.i.haarbrink@rug.nl">e.i.haarbrink@rug.nl</a>
<b>10. Tilburg University</b>	Law, Humanities, Social & behavioural sciences, Economics & management, Theology	Mr Guido van Leerzem	<a href="mailto:g.vanleerzem@uvt.nl">g.vanleerzem@uvt.nl</a>
<b>11. Wageningen University</b>	Food toxicology, Environmental sciences, Water quality, Risk assessment, Analytical Biochemistry, Natural	Prof Vervoort	<a href="mailto:Jacques.vervoort@wur.nl">Jacques.vervoort@wur.nl</a>

	products research, Bioinformatics		
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