



**RISA**

**Research and Innovation  
Support and Advancement**

**Grants Management and Systems Administration  
Masters and Doctoral Scholarships Grants Manual**

**2016**

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List of Acronyms

|      |   |
|------|---|
| APR  | Annual Progress Report                          |
| DA   | Designated Authority                            |
| GMSA | Grants Management and Systems Administration    |
| HEI  | Higher Education Institution                    |
| HICD | Human and Institutional Capacity Development    |
| RISA | Research and Innovation Support and Advancement |
| NRF  | National Research Foundation                    |

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Application guidelines are explained in this document. Please 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.

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## 1. Introduction

This Manual provides an overview of the masters and doctoral scholarship funding instruments, application funding guidelines and processes. It should be read in conjunction with the funding instrument call or framework document, which can be accessed at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. It does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

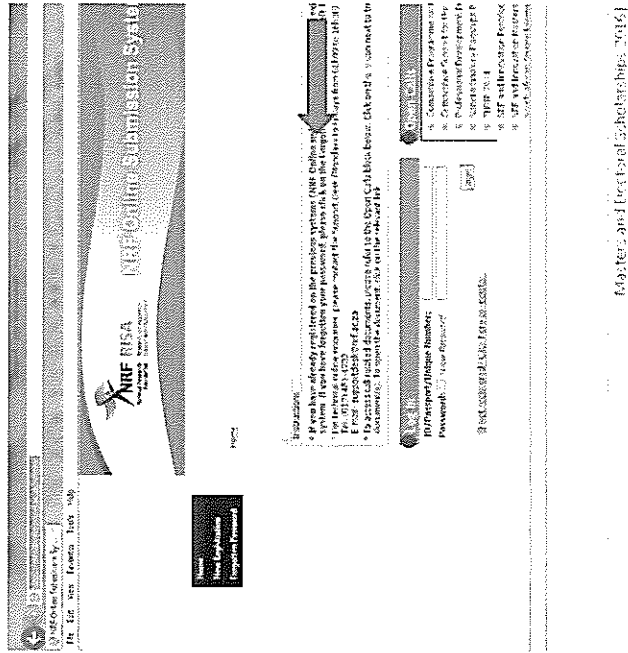
## 2. Application Process

The NRF issues a call for masters and doctoral scholarship applications that is published on the NRF website and is accessible online at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. The masters and doctoral scholarships funding instruments 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 must be submitted electronically to the institutional DA of the submitting institution for validation at the deadline date determined by individual institutions. Please enquire at your institution regarding their 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.

## 3. How to Submit Applications

Applications may be completed on the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za> from Wednesday, **12 August 2015**. Applicants are advised to complete their applications as soon as possible to prevent IT system overload nearer the closing date.

**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 were registered on the NRF Online System (<http://nfonline.nrf.ac.za>) before February 2012, 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











#### 4.2 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.

##### 4.2.1 Panel Review

Panel members are selected from the NRF database that is updated on a continuous basis, and other sources. In compiling 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.

The Review Panel provides recommendations to the NRF and the final funding decision is made by the NRF. In awarding grants in this funding instrument, the NRF takes into account the recommendations of the peer review panels, the objectives and targets of the funding instrument, and the available funds.

#### 5. 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 scholarship applications 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.

#### NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Master's and Doctoral Scholarship Applications

| Assessment Category   | Description  |
|---|--|
| The applicant's past, current and potential academic performance        | <p>This refers to the academic potential of the applicant, taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential of the applicant to undertake an independent research project;</li> <li>journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents;</li> <li>Leadership roles; and</li> <li>Previous awards, prizes and honours.</li> </ul>  |
| The feasibility and merit of the applicant's research project proposal; | <p>Research objectives to match aims of study – Reviewers will assess whether the research objectives are clearly stated and whether they are appropriate to meet the aims of the study; are sound but have inconsistencies and can be refined; are appropriate but only partially address the aims of the study; or are not appropriate to meet the aims of the study.</p> <p>Research methodology to match research objectives – Reviewers will comment on whether the research methodology is appropriate to meet objectives of study; is sound but has inconsistencies and can be refined; is appropriate but only partially addresses study objectives; or not appropriate to meet objectives of study.</p> <p>Research Plan - is the research plan feasible and detailed.</p> <p>For students doing a Masters by coursework and dissertation, some idea of the research topic and understanding is required for assessment.</p> <p>Referee's reports are considered in the assessment of the application. These provide an account of the student's academic capabilities in relation to the research and the research field. The reviewers will look for consistencies in the reference reports as well as support for the applicant, proposed research study, capacity to host the research (if required) and evidence of institutional infrastructure or resources to support the applicant and the research.</p> |
| References  | <p>Reviewers will assess whether the study has a potential for outputs in terms of knowledge generation, e.g. publications or patents and potential impact.</p>  |
| Research outputs and publication plan                                   | <p>Reviewers will assess whether the study has a potential for outputs in terms of knowledge generation, e.g. publications or patents and potential impact.</p>  |



## 6. Applications 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](http://www.nrf.ac.za). 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.

Should an unsuccessful applicant require feedback, they are requested to follow the appeals process and queries via their institutional office. The NRF does not provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants due to the high volume of applicants within this funding instrument.

Unsuccessful applicants that wish to appeal the funding decision taken by the NRF must follow the appropriate Appeals Process of the NRF. Appeals will only be considered for this funding instrument within a two month period after the official date of publishing of the results on the NRF website.

## 7. Awardee Responsibilities

### 7.1 Reporting

Continued funding beyond the first year is dependent on the submission of an Annual Progress Report (APR) to the NRF during a call for APR's in October / November of each grant year. Continued funding will be considered based on satisfactory progress.

An APR must be submitted by the awardee / grant-holder in a format provided by the NRF, documenting progress made against set objectives and research outputs. The NRF may in consultation with the Research Office, request interim progress reports for the purpose of implementing corrective measures timeously to ensure that stated objectives are met within stipulated timeframes.

### 7.2 Managing changes during the project life cycle

Changes may occur during the project life cycle due to unforeseen and extenuating circumstances. Please note the following on how to manage the award and subsequent changes (planned or unanticipated) should they arise during the project life cycle.

## 7.2.1 Change Requests

### 7.2.1.1 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 / Post graduate funding Office for approval prior to the change.

### 7.2.1.2 Changes in Project Scope, Supervisor or Institution

Changes may occur where a project scope, supervisor or institution needs to be changed from the original research proposal, supervisor 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.

## 8. Scientific Compliance

### 8.1 Methodology

The student 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 workplan for the research proposal approved by the NRF so as to achieve the project's stated aims and objectives.

### 8.2 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, 1* which will override this condition of grant.

### 8.3 Ethics

The student 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.

List of References

- 1 RSA (2008). Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008. *Government Gazette*, 22 Dec 2008. Vol 522, No 31745

