NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

APPLICATION FOR EVALUATION AND RATING 2026

UCT APPLICATION GUIDE and TEMPLATE

This document has been prepared by the UCT Research Office and aims to provide applicants with a quick overview of the NRF evaluation and rating system, including the application. Applicants are requested to consult the NRF Guidelines, at https://www.nrf.ac.za/rating/, in conjunction with this document[1].

ENQUIRIES:
- For application-related and technical queries about the online application form, please contact Mrs Amanda Raman (amanda.raman@uct.ac.za) or the NRF's Support Desk at supportdesk@nrf.ac.za or 012 481-4202.
- Also see   https://www.uct.ac.za/research-support-hub/accreditation-evaluation/nrf-ratings   for more information.

1. NRF RATING: OVERVIEW

- The evaluation and rating of individuals is based primarily on the **quality and impact** of the research outputs in the recent past. "Recent", in the context of the NRF evaluation and rating system, means outputs of the past **eight years**, and which, for the current closing date *(i.e. 1 February 2026)*, is defined as **1 January 2018 to 31 December 2025**
- The evaluation is undertaken by national and international reviewers who are requested to critically scrutinise the research published during the assessment period.
- Applications are made either by "established" researchers with a solid track record (categories C, B and A), or by "younger" researchers who show potential of becoming established within a five-year period (Y) or becoming future leaders in their field (P). *[See further below for definitions of the rating categories.]*
- The timing of an application to the NRF is important, as a negative outcome (no rating) will prevent another application from being made within the next 2-3 years.
- If you are a "younger" researcher (35/40 years or younger) and completed your **PhD in 2020**, you will need to apply now in order to be considered for rating respectively, in the P (35) or Y (40) categories.
- New applicants are welcome to contact the Research Office to establish their rating-readiness.

2. HOW TO APPLY ONLINE

- Applications are submitted on the **NRF Connect** online system, https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/.
- You will need to register on the NRF Connect system if you are a first-time user.
- The ORCID iD is a compulsory requirement in all applications/progress reports to the NRF. To create an ORCID iD click on https://orcid.org/ and <SIGN IN/REGISTER> and follow the prompts.
- Add your publications in 'Works' section using available options: Add DOI, Add PubMed ID, Search & Link.
- To link your ORCID iD with NRF Connect you must authorise ORCID iD to allow this. For further assistance contact your Principal librarians http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/lib/research/subject-librarians.
- You have the option to link your eRA profile to your ORCID iD profile if your research record on eRA is more up to date.
- Create your Rating application which you will find on the Dashboard. This is a once-off process, after which you will continue to edit this application.
- An "offline" template – which may be used to prepare the key narratives required for the application – is available at the end of this document. The final text must be transferred to the online system, in order to complete the submission.

3. UCT INTERNAL REVIEW FOR NRF RATING APPLICATIONS

- There are various **UCT internal closing dates** for rating applications which applicants can select, to suit their schedule.

---

[1] This document has been compiled using existing and available resources from the NRF. Please consult the NRF documentation at https://www.nrf.ac.za/rating/ as the primary source of information.

Submission Date	Feedback Timeline
31 December 2025 to -6 February 2026	Feedback by 27 February 2026
7 February to 6 March	Feedback by 3 April 2026
7 March to 31 March 2026 by 16:30 **(Late applications)**	Feedback in by 20 April 2026

- Applications are completed online at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/, and applicants should click the "final submit" button when the application is complete, allowing the Research Office to access their applications.
- The Research Office will solicit comments from an expert panel to help strengthen applications.
- Applicants will receive feedback as per the above schedule, with the option to meet with a panel member if necessary.
- NRF system (application) deadline is **16:30 on 31 March 2026**

4. ADVANTAGES OF BEING RATED

- The rating is used as a national indicator of excellence and is to the advantage of your faculty and the University in terms of benchmarking.
- It is a measurement of your academic profile and may be considered when applying for promotion and/or career advancement opportunities in academia.
- A successful rating allows one the option of applying for **incentive funding for rated researchers** from the NRF, the amount of which is directly proportional to the researcher's rating, and to apply to NRF funding programmes which are ringfenced for rated researchers.

5. ELIGIBILITY*

The following persons are eligible to apply for evaluation and rating:
- **Permanent/fulltime (P/FT) researchers employed at UCT.**
- **Fixed term contract/fulltime (C/FT) researchers**** formally affiliated with UCT (e.g. retired researchers, research associates/fellows) who are active researchers with a notable track record in research and/or postgraduate student supervision.
- **Fixed term contract/part time (C/PT) researchers**** at UCT who active researchers with a notable track record in research and/or postgraduate student supervision are and could include:
  - Persons holding joint appointments between UCT and a foreign institution; or
  - Persons holding joint appointments between UCT and another institution within SA.
- Persons who are **in the process of being appointed in full-time posts** at UCT. A motivation confirming the researcher's employment and proposed start date should be provided before the rating will become valid.

** The current contract must still be valid at the closing date and the applicant/HoD will need to motivate the institutional benefits in terms of capacity building and/or student postgraduate training as well as the institutional commitment in terms of future support to enable the applicant to retain his/her association. Provide some commitment that the association will still be in place two years after the rating becomes valid. Applications from researchers in these categories will be screened by an NRF panel for validity of the claims before being processed.

6. DEFINITION OF RESEARCH

For purposes of the NRF, research is original investigation undertaken to gain knowledge and/or enhance understanding.
  Research specifically includes:
  - the creation & development of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines (e.g. through dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases);
  - the invention or generation of ideas, images, performances and artefacts where these manifestly embody new or substantially developed insights;

- building on existing knowledge to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, policies or processes.

It specifically excludes:
- routine testing and analysis of materials, components, instruments and processes, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques.
- the development of teaching materials and teaching practices that do not embody substantial original enquiry

7. NRF RATING CATEGORIES

A: Researchers who are unequivocally recognised by their peers as leading international scholars in their field for the high quality
& impact of their recent research outputs.

B: Researchers who enjoy considerable international recognition by their peers for the high quality of their recent research outputs.

C: Established researchers with a sustained recent record of productivity in the field who are recognised by their peers as having:
- produced a body of quality work, the core of which has coherence and attests to ongoing engagement with the field
- demonstrated the ability to conceptualise problems and apply research methods to investigating them.

P: Young researchers (normally younger than 35 years of age), who have held the doctorate or equivalent qualification for less than five years at the time of application and who, on the basis of exceptional potential demonstrated in their published doctoral work and/or their research outputs in their early post-doctoral careers are considered likely to become future leaders in their field.

Y: Young researchers (40 years or younger), who have held the doctorate or equivalent qualification for less than five years at the time of application, and who are recognised as having the potential to establish themselves as researchers within a five-year period after evaluation, based on their performance and productivity as researchers during their doctoral studies and/or early post-doctoral careers.

8. NRF SPECIALIST COMMITTEES/ASSESSMENT PANEL

When completing the information online you will be required to select at least one assessment panel which is most appropriate for your research (and a maximum of three assessment panels in order of priority) must be selected from the dropdown list of assessment panels.

Consult the 'Key Research Areas and Types of Research Outputs document', New proposed Assessment Panels and the Education Panel's sub panels in order to ascertain the most appropriate panel.

- Anthropology, Development Studies, Geography, Sociology and Social Work
- Basic and Applied Microbiology
- Biochemistry, Molecular and Cell Biology
- Chemistry
- Communication, Media Studies, Library and Information Sciences
- Earth Sciences
- Economics, Management, Administration and Accounting
- Education
- Engineering
- Health Sciences: Public/Clinical/Basic Sciences
- Historical Studies
- Information Technology
- Law
- Literary Studies, Languages and Linguistics
- Mathematical Sciences
- Performing and Creative Arts, and Design
- Physics
- Plant Sciences
- Political Sciences and Philosophy
- Psychology
- Religious Studies and Theology
- Veterinary and Animal Production Sciences
- Zoological Sciences

9. HINTS AND TIPS

- Use the **offline template (below)** to compile your narrative sections (e.g. personal profile and self-assessment), as this will allow you to spell/grammar-check your work and also check the length. The narrative sections are limited to either 1 or 2 pages each; the online system may automatically delete extra

text.

- Only include published research output in your application which reviewers can access in the public domain. Do not include publications that are **in press, submitted or in preparation** in your research outputs section. These should be listed in the section "ongoing & planned future research".
- Where applicable, include the **Impact Factor** of journals, together with **citation** records & an **h-index**—include this in your research outputs and narrative sections. Principal librarians can assist with this.
- When adding **multi-authored publications**, or if you are not the senior author on a publication, it is important to outline *your own* contributions to the research/publication.
- The rating application is a time-consuming process, and it is recommended that you set aside at least two weeks for compiling the application, including the online data entry.

10. OFFLINE APPLICATION GUIDE AND TEMPLATE

The purpose of this section is two-fold:
- To give you an idea of the data fields required for an application for evaluation and rating.
- To guide you with the completion of key narrative sections; this includes hints and tips for completing each section, and the Word document allows for spell and grammar checking, as well as word-count. Please transfer your narratives from this form to the online application.

Please do not submit this document for internal review. All applications must be completed online. Please note this template is based on the previous year's submission and may contain changes when the new call opens.

A. CV SECTION

This table highlights sections/fields in the CV Section of the application which you may prepare in advance:

SECTION/FIELD	COMMENT
Additional details/information	Contact your Principal librarian to assist with these bibliometrics or find them on http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/lib/research/subject-librarians
Web of Science h-index	
Date drawn	**Principal librarians:**
Scopus h-index	
Date drawn	
Google h-index	
Provide the relevant link	
Date drawn	
Career profile	If you are on contract, please refer to item 5 above, Eligibility, and the relevant section pertaining to staff on contract.

Principal librarians table:

CHED	Glynnis Johnson	glynnis.johnson@uct.ac.za
Commerce	Glynnis Johnson	glynnis.johnson@uct.ac.za
EBE	Amina Adam	amina.adam@uct.ac.za
FHS	Brandon Adams	brandon.adams@uct.ac.za
Humanities	Namhla Madini	namhla.madini@uct.ac.za
Law	Sadiq Keraan	sadiq.keraan@uct.ac.za
Science	Amina Adam	amina.adam@uct.ac.za

Research Office: Amanda Raman & Mbasa Mguye

B. RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Capture these directly on the NRF Connect system. Here are comments on selected research outputs:

RESEARCH OUTPUT	COMMENT
Articles in Refereed/Peer-reviewed Journals	Only include full-length refereed articles here.
Books Chapters in Books	Do not include any contributions to conferences that have been published in book form in this section.
Refereed/Peer-reviewed Conference Outputs	Only published conference proceedings that have been subjected to a rigorous and full refereeing/peer-review process must be included here. Do not include peer-reviewed published abstracts nor published conference proceedings that have not been subjected to a rigorous and full refereeing/peer-review process.
Patents	Provide information on all past and current patents under your name or as a result of a collaborative effort. Also include whether the patent is a Utility, Design or Plant patent in the description section.
Keynote and Plenary Addresses	Include appropriate descriptions of keynote and plenary addresses where your research has been presented at a high level at international conferences/symposia. Do not include addresses to secondary/high school students, lectures in local/foreign institutions, etc.
Article in Non-refereed/Non-peer review Journals	Applicant's contribution could address for example, the following: conceptualised idea for research, lead author writing up the article,

	corresponding author and Project leader/budget owner. If you have a DOI please indicate accordingly. If you don't have a DOI then indicate Not Applicable or N/A as this is a compulsory field.
Other significant conference outputs	These could include published conference proceedings that are not peer-reviewed as well as published abstracts of conference proceedings that are peer-reviewed. Do not provide an exhaustive list of your conference outputs but rather be selective and include only the best other significant conference outputs from which there were published outputs that may be assessed by your reviewers as enhancing your research status.
Technical/Policy Reports	List only those reports that you believe may be assessed by your reviewers as enhancing your research status.
Products	May be defined as something produced; e.g. a commodity, a play, a creation, an invention.
Artefacts	May be defined as an object that has been intentionally made or produced for a certain purpose e.g. a broadcast video, a film, a documentary, an object, an item.
Prototypes	May be defined as an original model on which something is patterned e.g. a model, a mock-up, dummies, paradigm.
Other Recognised Research Outputs	These include any other measurable research outputs that clearly embody new or substantially developed insights, for example, annotated bibliographies, catalogues, CD-ROMS, contributions to major research databases, development and production of software, dictionaries, electronic publications, plant-breeding rights, research guides, scholarly editions, vaccines, websites, etc. For all these research outputs concise descriptions must be included with particular reference to the contribution to new knowledge and insights.
In the case of multi-authored outputs, it is important that you list your own contribution to the team effort.	Possible examples of own contribution could address the following: • Conceptualised idea for research • Responsible for data collection/analysis/design • Lead author writing up of article • Wrote first draft, editorial input • Postgraduate supervisor of the lead author • Owner/co-owner of intellectual property of research • Co-developed and executed research • Project leader/budget owner

C. BEST RESEARCH OUTPUTS IN THE LAST 8 YEARS

NRF Instructions:
- Select not more than **five outputs** that you consider to be your best during the assessment period.
- For each of these selected entries, give brief reasons, in no more than one or two sentences (± 800 characters, including spaces), for your choice. For example: 115 citations since 2001; a novel method or new direction in the field; invited to deliver keynote addresses in Chicago and London on these research findings; top-ranked journal in the field with an impact factor of 3.25; most prestigious conference in my field; exhibited in major galleries around the world, etc.
- Copies of the five best outputs must be included with the application. Please go to the 'Attachments' section on the Edit Application screen and upload the five best research outputs in the last 8 years selected in this section. (Please note: No other attachments may be added under the attachments section expect copies of the five best outputs. If the title of the research outputs and the uploaded outputs do not correspond, your application will be rejected).

Research Office comments

D. BEST RESEARCH OUTPUTS FROM STUDENT SUPERVISION IN LAST 8 YEARS

NRF Instructions:

- Provide the **names of the research students** (doctoral and master's) whom you would like to identify as having contributed to your core research area during the period under review (**i.e. 1 January 2018 - 31 December 2025**) who have produced, in your opinion, the best research outputs such as peer-reviewed publications, books, peer reviewed journal articles, refereed conference proceedings etc.
- Include **full references of the research contribution(s).** If you have already provided these outputs amongst your own research outputs (in terms of co-authored outputs) you are not required to capture them under this field.
- This information should **not exceed 5 500 characters including spaces** (equivalent to one A4 page). Note: Carriage returns are counted as two characters.

E. BEST RESEARCH OUTPUTS PRIOR TO LAST 8 YEARS

NRF Instructions:

If you have research outputs preceding **2018**, your rating application will be enhanced if you provide reviewers with some indication about the best work which you have done in this period. You are given the opportunity to provide up to **ten** research outputs which you consider your best before **2018**. These outputs need to have been captured in the relevant section(s) **on the CV** in order for them to appear in the section 'Best research outputs prior to the last eight years'.

- Identify not more than **ten** of your best research outputs prior to the last eight years.
- No motivation is required in this case.

F. PERSONAL PROFILE

NRF instructions:

- Provide a brief biographical sketch (not in bullet form) giving information not already provided elsewhere in the application.
- The introduction must be written as a narrative and could include a short overview of where, in terms of research, you have come from, in what you are interested (in very broad terms) and where you are now.
- Mention should be made of awards and prizes, membership of editorial boards, membership of national and international scientific committees, and other tangible recognition you have. (The latter could include citations, names of journals for which you have been invited to act as reviewer, etc.). This will enable reviewers to obtain some perspective on you and to assess your major awards and recognition.
- The biographical information should not exceed **5 500 characters including spaces** (equivalent to one A4 page, Arial font size 10). **Note:** Carriage returns are counted as two characters.

UCT Research Office comments: **This is an important section and not to be used simply to provide family and other personal details. The narrative here should focus on your research career and if you wish to insert personal details we recommend that these be tied to your research career so that the story that you tell provides useful context to your career as researcher. This section can also contain material (such as awards, membership of editorial committees) but it is important to link this as closely as possible to your RESEARCH. Your rating is determined by your research, its impact, coherence and quality. You need to demonstrate this and you should try and start doing this in this narrative, biographical section.**

Your personal profile (5 500 characters):

G. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF COMPLETED RESEARCH

NRF instructions:

A succinct **narrative** of accomplished research **emphasising only achievements over the last eight years (i.e. 1 January 2018 - 31 December 2025**, and with reference to the relevant research outputs listed for the last eight

years, must be provided. If the relevant outputs may not have been read by, or be accessible to reviewers, it is essential that you include a brief but concise description of the work done, a summary of the results achieved and an explanation of the significance of the work.

Your statement on your completed research should not exceed **11 000 characters including spaces** (equivalent to two A4 pages). **Note**: Carriage returns are counted as two characters.

Research Office comments: **DESCRIBE your research, leaving the ASSESSMENT (as much as is possible) for the next narrative block. We recommend that the ORDER of your description follow the order of your best research outputs, i.e. begin your narrative by describing the research that you have listed as your BEST output and proceed in this manner, covering each of your 'best' outputs in turn. Alternatively, you can arrange your narrative THEMATICALLY (if you have several research interests). There is no one, perfect, way, but the order can be important as you will want to convey a strong message about the coherence of your research and its quality.**

Your description of completed research: (11 000 characters):

H. SELF-ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH OUTPUTS

NRF instructions:

An assessment of your own contributions to your research field over the last 8 years must be provided. The self-assessment should also be in the form of a narrative, where special emphasis should be placed on those contributions listed amongst the best research outputs. Please provide an account of how these best research outputs reflect the development and growth of your research during the recent years. Mention should be made of instances where you have, in your view, made noteworthy contributions to the extension of knowledge in your field, as well as how your work relates to others in your field. Your self-assessment should only relate to research done during the last 8 years.

Where more than one person has contributed to the research outputs you have listed you must indicate your own contribution to the team effort in this section.

Your self-assessment statement should not exceed **5 500 characters including spaces** (equivalent to one A4 page). **Note:** Carriage returns are counted as two characters.

UCT Research Office comments: **This is a critical section, possibly the most important of the FOUR narrative sections. Here you need to show the IMPACT and QUALITY of your work while still demonstrating the coherence of your research. For Y & P applicants, the task is to demonstrate the potential of your work, but you should nevertheless draw attention to impact, quality and coherence already achieved or in the process of being achieved. For A/B/C applicants you need to demonstrate that you have already achieved these goals. For all applicants your goal here should be to demonstrate that you deserve a rating (as described) and (very importantly) present relevant evidence to support your self-assessment. This is the place to discuss impact factors and citation rates, the nice things people have said about your research work, and so on. It is worth doing a bit of research here to find evidence that best attests to the impact of your work. This section demands a careful balance between pomposity and modesty and striking the balance right is not easy.**

You might also cover issues of COHERENCE in your research. While you should already have described your 'area' of research work in the two previous narrative sections, you should remind the reviewer in this section what your 'area' is and if necessary ARGUE that your research outputs show the COHERENCE of your work.

Your self-assessment: (5 500 characters):

I. ONGOING AND PLANNED FUTURE RESEARCH

NRF instructions:
Provide a brief but comprehensive statement in the form of a **narrative** on your ongoing and planned future research. This must include your research vision for the next six years as well as a concise discussion of your envisaged research activities during this period.

Any outputs that have not yet been published/produced, (i.e. those 'in press' or 'accepted' or 'submitted') must NOT BE included as research outputs in the period under review but should be included in this section.

Your statement should not exceed <u>5 500 characters including spaces</u> (equivalent to one A4 page). **Note:** Carriage returns are counted as two characters.

UCT Research Office comments: **In this section you should try and show that the expertise that you have developed will be put to good use in the future. You will want to show that your future planned research strengthens the coherence of your research (we do not recommend striking out in an entirely new direction unless you can show that it links in some way with your previous research achievements).**

We recommend that you discuss planned collaborations with other academics, researchers and universities, the prospect of obtaining research funding and add here, too, the details of articles, chapters and books that are IN PRESS (i.e. likely to come out in 2024 or beyond).

Your ongoing and future research statement: (5 500 characters):

J. POSSIBLE REVIEWERS

NRF instructions:
- Provide names and full contact details of a minimum of **six** possible reviewers' and a maximum of ten possible reviewers' **in order of priority** who are best able to assess your recent research activities and contributions.
- Reviewers from the same institution as the applicant is discouraged.
- Reviewers should be nominated from both South Africa and abroad.
- Reviewers need not be restricted to researchers in the higher education sector. In each case provide a motivation for selection (e.g. reviewer is top researcher in the field). This will provide Specialist Committees with additional information in the selection of reviewers. The association that you have with the reviewer should be clearly articulated (e.g. previous PhD supervisor, co-worker etc.). Provide information that is accurate, current and complete. It is especially important that email addresses are correct.

UCT Research Office comments: **We recommend a mix of reviewers who are PEERS both local and international. If you are hopeful of an A or B rating then we recommend that you have more INTERNATIONAL reviewers (since A/B categories are assessing international standing). As a rule, we don't recommend including former students as reviewers though it is alright to include research collaborators. But we stress that your nominated reviewers should be varied and that your reasons for nomination should in each case discuss the PEER quality of the proposed reviewer as the NRF rating system is one of peer-review.**

K. ATTACHMENTS
- Please consult with the NRF Call documents to determine what attachments are necessary.
- Capture an appropriate Description for the document to be uploaded.
- Upload copies of your best research outputs to the online system.