



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
POSTGRADUATE CENTRE AND FUNDING OFFICE**

**POLICY
ON FUNDING FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS (Honours, master's and Doctoral
only)**

*This document summarizes policy concerning funds (internal and external) administered by the University of Cape Town (UCT) Postgraduate Funding Office (PGFO) for postgraduate students (Honours, master's and Doctoral - excluding PG Diploma students), as approved by the Postgraduate Studies Funding Committee, a subcommittee of Senate. The purpose of this policy is to guide the governance of funding available for students of Honours, master's and Doctoral degrees (from here on **the degree**) fairly, within the budgets and strategies of UCT.*

While this policy addresses postgraduate funding awards broadly, note that each individual category of award has its own set of 'regulations' (i.e., Conditions) detailed in the various calls, adverts and claims (setting out the conditions) associated with the specific award.

It is the intent of UCT to support and enable eligible postgraduate students through various sources in providing funding in the form of financial assistance that will contribute either in part, or, in certain cases in whole, towards the costs of tuition and attendance at UCT. Such funding is not intended to be used for historical fee debt relief.

1. General eligibility and requirements for funding

Although each individual award indicates eligibility, UCT's general eligibility for funding includes the following:

1. To be considered for selection of an award, applicants must have applied for admission to UCT (using the on-line portal for such).
2. Eligibility for master's funding requires that the independent research component of the degree must contribute at least one-third of the final master's degree credits (i.e., 60 of 180 credits).
3. Applicants should be registered as UCT students before funding is disbursed. (*See Section 2.*)
 - o All awards are disbursed through the student fee account once the student has registered and submitted a claim form. Some funding/awards are paid in installments depending on the nature of the award, either in monthly instalments, or in other cases in two tranches, at registration and after 6 months (normally in July), the second installment being only payable in the second semester and dependent on satisfactory progress reported.
4. Students are not eligible for UCT-sourced funding if they work for more than 20 hours per week. (*See Section 3.*)
5. Students who hold income (from all sources) more than the limitations shown in *Section 4* below are eligible only to hold a portion of certain awards (up to the maximum limit), or, in some cases, specific awards preclude a student from holding concurrent funding awards.
 - o UCT reserves the right to recover any UCT-sourced funds allocated to any student from the University's own funding if the student receives support more than the stated maxima in *Section 3*.
6. Students who already hold a postgraduate degree and who register for a second degree at the same or lower level are ineligible, e.g.: a master's graduate who

registers for a further master's degree or a Doctoral graduate who registers for an Honours or a second Doctoral degree.

7. Students registered for the M Med and MBA degrees are not eligible for funding.
8. Candidates registered for master's programmes (professional degrees) with a research component of 33.3% can be considered for funding. However, the final conditions in terms of number of employment hours and gross annual income need to be met.
9. Students will be required to submit a mid-year academic progress report approved by their course convener or supervisor, for the release of second instalments (remaining credit balances), if applicable, and the application for renewal of awards. (*Sections 4 and 5 below, respectively.*)
10. Funding applications are year-specific and will not be transferred to a subsequent year except in the case of renewals or approved deferrals.
11. Should a student change their academic programme during their studies, such as at the beginning of the second year, the funding tenure will be calculated from the start of the original degree programme and may not be extended.

2. Disbursement of award on receipt of the acceptance of the award via the online claim forms

Students are only eligible for payment of a bursary or scholarship after they have been accepted for study and once the student is registered for the degree for which funding was applied for.

The award claim form in which the conditions of awards and grants are recorded is the legal document in which students undertake to accept and abide by the rules, conditions and requirements made of them. Each student receives a claim form for each award, or part thereof, awarded.

Successful award holders will be notified via their official UCT email address and are required to accept their funding online via an award claim form which is generated by the PGFO to the student's UCT email address.

In line with SARS regulations no award will be disbursed/refunded to the supervisor's research or scholarship funds. All awards will be disbursed by the PGFO upon acceptance of the award online of a claim form to the student's UCT fee account.

The PGFO payout process arises due to credit balances (award allocated exceeds fee cost) on postgraduate students' fee accounts. The payouts are paid directly into the students' bank accounts by EFT via the Fees Office. Students are solely responsible for loading and changing their banking details on PeopleSoft. Several checklists are in place to manage the risks associated with the manual refunds process and prevent overpayments to students.

Students who cancel registration during the year will have their funding adjusted *pro rata* according to the merits of the case. Any debt arising from such, and adjustment is the responsibility of the student.

Failure to report other sponsorship/funding received will result in UCT- sourced funds being withdrawn and cancelled. Any debt arising from such, and adjustment is the responsibility of the student.

3. Employment

Full-time employed students are ineligible for funding.

For the purposes of UCT-sourced funding, full-time employment is defined as working more than 20 hours per week. Students who are employed for up to 20 hours per week are required to provide a letter from their employers stating their employment details, specifically the number of hours worked per week and the total remuneration package.

Students who receive a National Research Foundation (NRF) award may not exceed 12 hours of work per week.

4. Overall limitations on income from all funding sources

Applying a limit to total income from all sources (in respect of students receiving support via the University as well as external sources) ensures equitable distribution of available funding.

The overall limits for 2026 are:

Honours – R200 000.00

Master's – R265 000.00

Doctoral – R330 000.00

Case-by-case exceptions are approved, e.g., scholarships for supernumerary registrars and scholarships from international funders capping their values higher than that within the South African context and subsequently UCT.

UCT reserves the right to recover any UCT-sourced funds allocated to any student from the University's own funding if the student receives support more than the stated maxima.

5. Progress reports

A condition of all awards, except in a few cases, is the submission of an academic progress report from the student's course convenor or supervisor reflecting satisfactory academic progress at stipulated intervals (normally in June and December) each year. Failure to progress satisfactory and/or to submit the required academic progress report may result in withdrawal and cancellation of the award. Any resulting debt will be the responsibility of the student involved.

6. Renewals of awards

Some awards allow for renewals provided a student has made satisfactory progress and they are within the funding tenure for the degree (*see Section 7 below*).

7. Time frames for support (tenure)

7.1 Honours degree

Funding support is only available for one year for Honours students.

7.2 Master's degree

Normally two years – the second year of funding being renewable subject to proof of satisfactory progress.

Exception: A further award (extension funding) may be allocated to students for a third year; however, such extension awards will be pro-rated and subject to limitations depending on the source of funding and merits of the case. Extension funding may be allocated to students who require additional few months to complete their degree and graduate. Such motivation must be lodged and managed via an appeals process (see below). Acceptable reasons for extension awards could include:

- Requirement for corrections and re-submission of the dissertation.
- Late completion of the degree due to supervision problems, laboratory /equipment failure, etc. In such cases, detailed motivation endorsed by the supervisor and Dean of Faculty is required.

7.3 Doctoral degree

Normally three years – the second and third years of funding being renewable only on proof of satisfactory progress.

Exception: A further award (extension funding) may be allocated to students for a fourth year; however, such extension awards will be pro-rated and subject to limitations depending on the source of funding and merits of the case. Extension funding may be allocated to students who require additional few months to complete their degree and graduate. Such motivation must be lodged and managed via an appeals process (see below). Acceptable reasons for extension awards could include:

- Requirement for corrections and re-submission of the thesis.
- Late completion of the degree due to supervision problems, laboratory /equipment failure, etc. In such cases, detailed motivation endorsed by the supervisor and Dean of Faculty is required.

7.4 Upgrade from master's to Doctoral degree

Normally four years in total – the second, third and fourth years of funding being renewable only on proof of satisfactory progress.

Exception: A further award (extension funding) may be allocated to students for a fifth year; however, such extension awards will be pro-rated and subject to limitations depending on the source of funding and merits of the case. Extension funding may be allocated to students who require additional few months to complete their degree and graduate. Acceptable reasons for these awards could include:

- Requirement for corrections and re-submission of the thesis.
- Late completion of the degree due to supervision problems, laboratory /equipment failure, etc. In such cases, detailed motivation endorsed by the Dean of Faculty is required.

8. **Late or incomplete applications and cancellations**

The University reserves the right to decline late, incomplete, or inappropriate applications for funding. Withdrawn applications will be cancelled. This ensures that selection processes are fair, and that those students who have complied with the deadlines and application conditions compete on the same level.

9. **Conditions of awards and grants as laid down in bequests or by donors**

There is some funding for postgraduate students that is granted via bequests and specific donors. After establishing that they follow national tax laws and current UCT ethical considerations (as appropriate), UCT will ensure that the conditions of awards and grants as laid down in bequests or by donors, sponsors or the University, are adhered to.

The University reserves the right to cancel or withdraw any award made if the recipient of such an award does not comply with the stated conditions of the award.

All awards are governed by conditions that are approved by the DVC for Research & Internationalisation (or nominees). Such conditions ensure that:

- the University remains compliant with tax regulations/guidelines.
- the applications submitted by students in competition for such awards are assessed using the stated criteria, and
- the selection process for all awards is based on set and approved criteria.

The University is legally bound to abide by the conditions of award, which are often based on bequests or on the instructions of external donors, such as the NRF.

10. Recovery of awards

The University reserves the right to recover any funding transferred to the student's bank account, including funding disbursed on behalf of the NRF and/or parastatals, if that individual does not comply with the conditions of award, i.e., does not make satisfactory progress or if they are academically excluded or if such funding was received due to submission of fraudulent information. The University reserves the right to act and withdraw all funding in accordance with UCT policies and procedures.

11. Guarantee of funding and outstanding fee debts

The PGFO is not responsible for the outstanding fee debt of any student. The University is unable to provide any guarantee that every applicant for funding will receive support. It remains the student's responsibility to settle any outstanding fees.

12. Process for the repayment of funds by student

Where there have been omissions when releasing payouts to a student's bank account or where a student deregisters without prior notice or reasonable cause, these funds will be recovered by UCT. The student will be required to repay these funds to their UCT fee account within a reasonable timeframe, i.e., 72 hours from the time the student acknowledges notification from UCT. The recovery of such funds will be dealt with in UCT policies and procedures.

13. Leave of absence

A student who is granted a prospective academic concession for Leave of Absence (LOA) must submit supporting documentation to and inform the PGFO. Funding will be pro-rated or deferred according to the approval date of the LOA.

14. Appeals

Subject to the availability of funds, appeals will only be considered from students who have timeously submitted Postgraduate Funding Application forms in the first instance. An appeal may be considered for the following reasons:

- Re-assessment of the funding application because of a change in status/information originally submitted
- Request to uphold funds that exceed the maximum income limit
- Deferral of award
- Change to programme of study

Repeat appeals (i.e., where an appeal has already been considered and the outcome communicated), will not be considered.

This policy is subject to change without prior notification.
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Approved on 16 November 2021 by the Postgraduate Studies Funding committee (PSFC). Chair: Prof S Harrison, DVC: Research & Internationalisation

Approved on 16 November 2022 by the Postgraduate Studies Funding committee (PSFC). Chair: Prof S Harrison, DVC: Research & Internationalisation

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Approved on 20 March 2025 by the Postgraduate Studies Funding committee (PSFC). Chair: Prof J Murugan, Acting DVC: Research & Internationalisation

Approved on 14 November 2025 by the Postgraduate Studies Funding committee (PSFC). Chair: Prof J Murugan, Acting DVC: Research & Internationalisation

Approved on 19 March 2026 by the Postgraduate Studies Funding committee (PSFC). Chair: Prof T Majozi, DVC: Research & Internationalisation