National Research Foundation

DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for the 2026 Academic Year – CALL NOW OPEN

The DSTI and NRF are pleased to announce a call for new applications for **SARAO DOCTORAL Student Funding for the academic year 2026**. All continuing students who are eligible for a second or third year of funding must submit a Progress Report and not a new application.

The NRF **minimum academic requirement** for postgraduate funding is **65%** for the previous degree. Successful applicants will be funded either at **Full Cost of Study (FCS)** or **Partial Cost of Study (PCS)**. The FCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens and Permanent Residents only, who are either **financially needy** (i.e., those whose combined household family income is less than or equal to R350 000 per annum), **living with a disability** or **exceptional academic achievers**. However, the PCS funding will be awarded to **5% of international students** including South African citizens and Permanent Residents who could not be funded under FCS but meet other minimum requirements for the NRF scholarship funding criteria. The scholarships are intended to support master's and doctoral candidates to pursue studies in all areas of **Science, Engineering, Technology, Social Sciences, and Humanities**.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- SARAO will consider applications from South African citizens and permanent residents, as well as from citizens of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia. Please familiarize yourself with all additional doctoral requirements via https://www.sarao.ac.za/researchandstudy/doctoral-scholarships/
- Applicants intending to register for a professional or coursework only degrees are ineligible
- Applicants intending to register for part-time study are ineligible
- Applicants who intend to register for any other degree other than doctoral are ineligible
- Please refer and familiarize yourself with the DSTI-NRF Postgraduate Scholarship Framework for 2026 Funding section 4 AND all additional doctoral requirements via https://www.sarao.ac.za/researchandstudy/doctoral-scholarships/

PROJECTS FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCH FOR THE 2026 ACADEMIC YEAR

Applicants are advised that **SARAO will ONLY consider applications from students who have selected a research project that has been approved by SARAO for Doctoral research in 2026**, and who upload a signed letter from the relevant supervisor stating that he/she will supervise the student.

HOW TO APPLY?

- Download the Application Guide for SARAO Doctoral Scholarships for 2026
- Application forms must be completed on the NRF Connect System at **https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za**
- **Login or register for ORCID iD**
- **Complete/Update** your personal profile and CV information and upload relevant documents if so applicable
- **Select** the "**SARAO Doctoral**" option
- Students may only **submit ONE application**
- Students MUST **upload all five required documents**
    1. SA and Perm SA citizens - a copy of your **South African ID**. For non-SA a copy of your **passport**
    2. ONE **single PDF of all university academic results** from start of your degree until now

3. An up-to-date **CV**
4. **Supervisor-agreement letter**
5. **Letter of Motivation.** IF ANY OF THESE FIVE DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ATTACHED TO YOUR APPLICATION, SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION.

o **TWO Letters of Reference** must be emailed directly to study.research@sarao.ac.za **before 15 July 2025 and should include the below information**

- The capacity in which the referee knows the applicant, and for how long they have known the applicant.
- The applicant's academic performance, and attitude to their studies.
- The applicant's research capabilities in terms of attitude, initiative, understanding of the subject, progress against deliverables, publications etc.
- The applicant's written and verbal communications skills.
- Any other relevant comments regarding applicant. IF YOUR APPLICATION IS NOT SUPPORTED BY TWO LETTERS OF REFERENCE SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION

Please refer to the Application and Funding Guide and Framework documents when completing the online application form at every step of the process. *All postgraduate call documents can be accessed via the NRF website: https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/nrf-call-for-proposals-for-funding-in-2025-and-2026/.

- DST-NRF Master's and Doctoral Application and Funding Guide for 2026
- DST-NRF Postgraduate Scholarship Framework for 2026
- Application Guide for SARAO Doctoral Scholarships for 2026
- NRF Statement of expectation for Postgraduate Training 2026
- Frequently Asked Questions Postgraduate Funding

Students' Applications Opening and Closing Dates:

2025 FUNDING CALLS	NRF OPENING DATES	UCT CLOSING DATE	DA (PGFO) APPLICATION SCREENING	UCT INTERNAL REVIEW	DA (PGFO) CLOSING DATE
FT MAST (incl. SARAO MAST)	14-May-25	**04-Jul-25 EXTENDED TO 11-Jul-2025**	7 JULY 2025 TO 8 AUGUST 2025	11 AUGUST 2025 TO 29 AUGUST 2025 (excl. SARAO MAST)	05-Sep-25

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER YOUR APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED?

- Once you submit your application, it will automatically be routed to UCT
- For your application to be considered for 2026 funding, you must submit your application and all supporting documentation on or before UCT's CLOSING DATE
- After DA screening, eligible applications will be submitted to NRF for their further consideration
- Ineligible applications will be rejected. Your application status can be monitored via your NRF Connect Profile
- The NRF will inform all applicants of the outcome of their application

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS

Please be advised that no incomplete applications will be submitted to NRF. It is the applicant's responsibility to familiarise themselves with all eligibility criteria and requirements. During DA screening, if your application is incomplete, the office will contact you via email requesting information. Such requests must be responded to within 24 hours. Failure to do so will result in your application being disqualified and as a result, will not be considered.

For enquiries

Please forward all enquiries to email: nrfdasupport@uct.ac.za or call the office at +27 21 650 3622 and selection option 3.

Website: https://uct.ac.za/students/fees-funding-postgraduate-degree-funding-bursaries-scholarships/research-scholarships

For Technical related enquiries, please contact:

NRF Support desk

Telephone: 012 481 4202

Email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za

For SARAO Master's and Doctoral-related enquiries, please contact:

Annah Mashemola at amashemola@sarao.ac.za. Telephone: 011 268 3420.

The UCT NRF administration team wishes you success with your application.