Call for Applications
NRF Thuthuka Programme

UCT Internal Deadline: 23 March 2026
Please direct all queries to Prince Khoza at (Prince.Khoza@uct.ac.za)

The Thuthuka funding instrument links to the strategic intent of the National Research Foundation (NRF), which seeks to promote and support the establishment of a transformed, internationally competitive and sustainable research workforce. It aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of researchers and scholars from designated groups (Black [African, Indian and Coloured], female or persons with disabilities) with the ultimate aim of redressing historical imbalances. Participation of individuals from non-designated groups is not excluded. The Thuthuka funding instrument supports well-structured research projects with achievable aims and sound methodologies, which support the study objectives and demonstrate the prudent use of funds. For more information, please refer to the following documents:

- **Framework Document**
- **Application Guide**
- **Institutional Support Form**

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Only **South African citizens and South African Permanent Residents** with a valid South African Identity Document number may apply. Individuals who are in the process of obtaining permanent residence will not be considered.
- Applicants must be employed on a **full-time** permanent or **full-time** contractual basis. If the applicant is appointed on a full-time contractual basis, the appointment date must extend to cover the duration of the grant i.e. 01 January 2027 to 31 December 2029. If the applicant's contract is not valid for the required period, a letter from the Head of Department confirming that the contract will be extended should the funding be awarded must be attached to the application.
- Female applicants who are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible to apply. This is limited to women raising children of four (4) years of age and below, and those living with a disability.
- Applicants in the PhD and Post PhD Tracks over the age of 45 years may be considered on submission of a motivation demonstrating that they are late entrants to research or that they are returning to research after a period of absence due to family responsibilities. This information must be included in the application under the *Absence from Research* section, and the motivation must be submitted as an attachment in the attachment section of the application.
- First-time applicants to Thuthuka may not be rated researchers but may become rated during the tenure of the Thuthuka grant. Applicants who are in the Thuthuka PhD and Post-PhD Track will be allowed to hold a Thuthuka research grant and the NRF rating simultaneously. However, this is only applicable for those that receive a Y-rating.
- The Thuthuka grant may not be held concurrently with a Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) grant and New Generation Academics Programme (nGAP). In cases where the BAAP and Thuthuka applications are submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the BAAP will be awarded.
- The **Institutional Support Form** is a **mandatory** requirement. Applicants are required to complete the form and submit it to Prince Khoza at (Prince.Khoza@uct.ac.za) by **23 March 2026.** The Research Office will arrange for the form to be signed and attached to the application before submission to the NRF. **It is recommended that each applicant notify their Head of Department that they are submitting an application for Thuthuka funding.**

SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA PER FUNDING TRACK

Applications for funding can be submitted in one of the following three tracks:

PhD Track:

- South African citizens and South African permanent residents with a valid South African Identity Number may apply for this track.
- Applicants should have obtained a masters qualification or in their final year of a masters qualification at the time of application and intending to pursue doctoral studies.
- Applicants must be registered for a doctoral degree at the time of commencement of the Thuthuka grant.
- Should a grantholder not complete the doctorate within six (6) years of funding in this funding instrument, no further funding will be considered beyond the sixth year.
- Should a grantholder complete the doctorate before a cycle of funding is completed, a new application should be submitted under the Post PhD track.
- Applicants who received previous freestanding and/or grantholder linked doctoral scholarships are **not eligible** to apply for further funding under the same level.

Post PhD Track:

- South African citizens and South African permanent residents with a valid South African Identity Number may apply for this track.
- Applicants should have obtained a doctoral degree no more than five (5) years prior to the date of first application. **Applicants who obtained their doctoral degree prior to February 2021 are therefore not eligible to apply for the Post-PhD Track.**
- Applicants who have not finalised their doctoral degree at the time of application are eligible to apply under this track. However, the NRF must receive proof of having passed the doctoral degree at the time of commencement of the Thuthuka grant. Applicants are required to indicate that the PhD is in progress under the qualification section of the application template and provide an estimated date for completion of doctoral studies.
- Individuals who have previously received postdoctoral fellowship funding from the NRF or elsewhere are eligible to apply for this Research Grant, provided that all other criteria are met. Individuals who are still Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible for a Thuthuka grant.

NRF Rating Track:

- South African citizens and South African permanent residents with a valid South African Identity Number may apply for this track.
- The applicant must have completed a doctoral degree prior to applying for a grant.
- Applicants who have received one cycle of funding under the Post PhD track are NOT eligible under the NRF Rating track.
- Applicants should have obtained their doctoral degree no more than eight (8) years prior to the date of first application. **Applicants who obtained their doctoral degree prior to February 2018 are therefore not eligible to apply in the Rating Track.**
- Applicants may not be an NRF-rated researcher at the time of the Thuthuka application.
- Applicants at the time of first application must demonstrate that they have been unable to establish themselves as researchers due to limited research opportunities. If such limitations are not clearly confirmed in the applicant's career profile, the application will be rejected and not considered for funding.
- A research focus must have been identified in an area in which the applicant plans to establish a research track record.

UCT INTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR THUTHUKA APPLICATIONS

- Applications will undergo review by the Research Office and the designated discipline-specific reviewers prior to submission to the NRF
- Applicants are required to identify and provide the contact details of **two or more internal or external academic experts** in their research field who can assess the scientific merit of the application and assist in strengthening the final submission. Please email the names and contact details of the nominated reviewers to **Prince Khoza at (Prince.Khoza@uct.ac.za)** by **16 March 2026. Applicants must inform the nominated reviewers and obtain their consent before submitting their details**.

<u>Important deadlines to note:</u>

Applicants provide the details of two or more internal /external academics as potential reviewers to (Prince.Khoza@uct.ac.za) by:	**16 March 2026**
Applicants complete and submit the **Institutional Support Form** to (Prince.Khoza@uct.ac.za) by:	**23 March 2026**
Applicants complete and submit the application on NRF Connect by:	**23 March 2026**
Applications are reviewed by discipline-specific reviewers, and feedback is provided to applicants between:	**24 March 2026 – 2 April 2026**
Final submission on NRF Connect by applicants after receiving feedback from the reviewers by:	**15 April 2026**

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

The **Application Guide** serves as a guideline on how to complete the online application.

The application must be completed on the **NRF Connect System**: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za

1. Register / Login using your ORCID and password.
2. Update your CV. (attach certified ID copy and qualifications).
3. On the Menu, click on Applications under My Applications tab.
4. Click on the + sign next to Research Grants.
5. Click on the *Create* button next to **Thuthuka…**
6. Complete all compulsory sections and the relevant non-compulsory sections.
7. Attach all the required documents in PDF format.
8. Submit the application on completion.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The NRF recommends the use of the DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan as a guide when drafting the Data Management Plan for the application proposal. For UCT Research Data Management information and resources, please click HERE

Applicants are only allowed to submit one application under the emerging researchers funding opportunities (BAAP, Young Academics Accelerator Programme (YAAP) or Support for Y-rated researchers programme).

The Research Office will not review applications submitted after the UCT internal closing date (23 March 2026)

For technical enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk: Supportdesk@risa.nrf.ac.za