



science and technology

Department:  
Science and Technology  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



RISA  
Research and Innovation  
Support and Advancement

# **Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) Framework**

**Directorate: Human and Infrastructure Capacity  
Development (HICD)**

**Date: February 2019**



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## 1. Introduction

The National Research Foundation (NRF) and the FirstRand Foundation (FRF) have partnered to pursue the goal of increasing the proportion of suitably qualified Black African academic staff and academic staff with disabilities, at South African public universities, by establishing the Black Academics Advancement Programme.

In the context of higher education, a doctoral qualification is a requirement for undertaking high quality research and supervising doctoral students. The production and support of emerging researchers, i.e. those that are on the path to becoming established researchers, is also a prerequisite to promote globally competitive research and innovation. The NRF therefore promotes the research development of emerging researchers, employed at South African public universities, from the pre-doctoral level to the attainment an NRF rating.

The FRF is a leader in corporate social investment in the financial services sector and the organisation's investment in this initiative, is guided by one of its strategic intent to contribute to a strengthened economy and a better South Africa through Education and Skills development. The two parties entered into an agreement to support Black academics, particularly Black African males and females and, persons with disabilities, employed at public universities in South Africa to attain doctoral level qualifications and postdoctoral research training. This intervention will span a five-year period aiming to make twenty five awards per annum to doctoral candidates and, twenty five awards per annum to postdoctoral candidates.

A major barrier for advancing research and postgraduate training at South African universities is the low proportion of academic staff with the appropriate qualifications to drive postgraduate research and to advance knowledge creation. In 2009, only one third of full-time permanent academic staff (PAS) held doctoral degrees. Furthermore, there was a net decline in the number of full-time university academic staff with doctoral degrees at the universities and universities of technology over the same period. The impact of the low proportion of suitably qualified academic staff increases the "*burden of supervision*" for postgraduate supervisors (CHE, 2009). This burden of supervision, at both the masters and doctoral levels increased across all fields of science between 2000 and 2005. At the Masters level, the ratio increased from 3.8 to 5.2 students per supervisor; and at the doctoral level from 1.3 to 2.2 students per supervisor, over the six-year period. This funding instrument is an intervention that will contribute directly to one of the targets of the National Development Plan 2030 (*Vision 2030*), to have 75% of university academic staff with a doctoral level qualification by the year 2030.

In addition to the burden of postgraduate supervision among South African universities, transformation continues to remain a critical imperative in South Africa, particularly considering the ethnic and gender composition of key sectors of society such as universities. Of the 3 392 NRF rated researchers in South Africa, in 2015, only 26% were Black, and 31% were female. The cohort of black NRF rated researchers comprised of 16% African, 3% Coloured, and 7% Indian academics and researchers. Black African South African citizens made up only 6% of the NRF rated researchers and only six (6) of these researchers achieved an NRF A rating. It is for this reason, that Black African participation in knowledge production and, transforming the profile of active Black researchers within the South African National System of Innovation (NSI)

is a fundamental imperative.

It is argued that a lack of resources and teaching demands are the major challenges that limit the completion of doctoral degrees by academic staff and also limits them in undertaking postdoctoral research on the path to becoming established researchers. This programme will therefore enable successful applicants to spend up to three (3) years undertaking full-time research to complete their doctoral degree or two (2) years of full-time postdoctoral research training.

## 2. Aim

This programme is a directed intervention aimed at promoting the development of Black academics specifically, Black African South African citizens and, academic staff with disabilities, by accelerating the training of doctoral and postdoctoral candidates to enhance their research training and accelerate their progression to become established researchers.

## 3. Objectives

In light of the above, the objectives of the Black Academics Advancement Programme are to:

- Support academics, particularly South African Black African females and persons with disabilities, employed at public universities in South Africa to attain a doctoral qualification and postdoctoral research training;
- Promote the attainment of an NRF rating by South African Black African early-career academics especially, Black and female researchers and persons with disabilities.

## 4. Allocation Principles

The Black Academics Advancement Programme supports well-structured research projects with achievable aims and sound methodologies which support the study's objectives and demonstrate the prudent use of funds. The selection of successful candidates for this grant will be guided by the principles outlined below.

**Equity and redress:** In keeping with the equity and transformation objectives of the country, BAAP will support only **South African citizens** employed at public universities as full-time academics. The equity target for this programme is to support, 90% Black African and 10% comprising of Indian, Coloured and persons with disabilities. Fifty five (55%) percent of all grants will be prioritised for female grantholders.

**Institutional spread:** Ideally, two (2) awards per annum will be made to each university that submits applications. At least one (1) of the two (2) awards to each university will be for a candidate that is pursuing a doctoral degree.

**Commitment to excellence:** Even though the programme has a developmental focus, only quality proposals that are scientifically sound and obtain a favourable independent merit review will be considered for funding.

**Achievability:** The research proposal and individual's development plan must be realistic, i.e. achievable in terms of the research objectives, the resources required and the projected completion times.

**Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Nomination:** Only applications with a letter of nomination including a strong motivation from the DVC Research (or equivalent) at the university where the academic is employed, will be considered for the grant award.

**Candidate's personal motivation:** As this is a developmental programme, only applications with a well-motivated academic and research career plan, with intended outcomes will be considered for the grant award.

## 5. Application Process

### 5.1 Call for Proposals

The NRF issues a Call for Proposals for Black Academics Advancement Programme annually. This Call will be accompanied by a detailed NRF Application and Funding Guide explaining the information to be included in the NRF Online application and the grant conditions and administration. Applicants' will be invited to apply for funding in one (1) of the following two (2) tracks:

- **Doctoral Track:** for applicants registered for a doctoral; and
- **Postdoctoral Track:** for applicants intending to pursue postdoctoral research training.

### 5.2 Call Requirements

A maximum of eight (8) applications may be submitted by each South African public university in response to the call for applications. Of the eight (8) applications, at least four (4) must be for doctoral track and the remainder may be for Postdoctoral Track.

Applicants' can apply for the doctoral track for one or two years if the doctoral is at the completion stage.

Applicants' applying for a Doctoral track may also structure the application flexibly to either complete the doctoral degree in three (3) years or spend at least one (1) year completing the doctoral degree and the remaining period undertaking Postdoctoral research training.

University management is required to implement processes to ensure that the NRF receives complete and well-motivated applications, by the closing date. In this regard, universities are encouraged to form strategic partnerships with other universities for proposal development, co-supervision and/or support for emerging research development.

Each application must include the following two compulsory motivations as attachments to the application:

- A letter of nomination including a **funding track of the applicant** and a strong motivation from the DVC Research (or equivalent) at the university where the academic is employed. This letter of motivation must detail the reasons for

nominating the candidate, the alignment with the university research and academic staffing plan and, any strategic partnership with other universities for proposal development, co-supervision and/or support for emerging research development.

- A self-motivation from the applicant detailing his/her academic and research career plan and the benefits and intended outcomes to be achieved from the time off period.
- Applications without the compulsory motivations will be automatically rejected without reconsideration.

## 5.3 Eligibility

### 5.3.1 Eligibility Criteria for applicants'

The following general eligibility criteria for candidates are applicable **to all applicants** for Black Academics Advancement Programme awards:

- Applicants' must be Black, South African citizens or South African citizens with disabilities;
- Applicants must hold a permanent, full-time academic appointment at one of the 26 public universities in South Africa;
- Applicants' must not have received or, hold a valid NRF A, B, C, or P rating at the time of commencement of the programme. Should an NRF Evaluation and Rating application and the BAAP application be submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then BAAP grant will not be awarded.
- This grant may not be held concurrently with the Thuthuka Grant. In cases where the BAAP and a Thuthuka applications are submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the Thuthuka grant will not be awarded.
- Applicants' should refer to the NRF Multiple Grants Eligibility Overview Table NRF online system.

### 5.3.2 Doctoral Track

The following eligibility criteria will apply, **at the time of application**, in respect of the Doctoral Track.

Applicants must:

- Be registered for a doctoral degree in any discipline;
- Not be older than forty (40) years of age;
- Have obtained a university Research and Higher Degrees Committee approval for the doctoral research proposal;
- Have obtained ethical clearance for the research proposal, if applicable; and
- Have the proposed doctoral research project, supported by the nominated supervisor.

### 5.3.3 Postdoctoral Track

The following eligibility criteria will apply, **at the time of application**, in respect of the Postdoctoral Track.

Applicants must:

- Not be older than forty five (45) years of age; and
- Have completed a doctoral degree within five (5) years of the time of application.

## 6. Proposal Screening and Review Processes

Following the institutional and NRF screening processes, proposals that meet the eligibility criteria and application requirements will be subjected to peer-review to assess substantive issues such as scientific merit and any other pre-determined content criteria, as outlined in the scorecard (refer to Table 1 below). Based on the outcomes of the review process, applications will either be eligible for funding or not.

**Please note** that applicants' must include clear research outputs which are aligned to timelines, particularly targeted conferences and possible publications in credible peer review journals to avoid being excluded during the awarding process. The programme does not support human capital development however applicants' are encouraged to include student supervision as it forms an integral part to their career advancement.

Thereafter, a selection committee will consider the recommendations from the review process and assess the budget requests in order to make the final awards for successful BAAP applications. The selection committee will comprise of representative from the NRF and FirstRand Foundation. Grant approvals and awards will be done in accordance with NRF auditing requirements.

**Table 1: NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Black Academics Advancement Programme**

Criterion	Review Dimensions	% Weighting
Institutional Nomination	Reasons for nominating the candidate by the DVC; Alignment with the university research and academic staffing plan; AND Strategic partnership with other universities for proposal development, co-supervision and/or support for emerging research development	10
Applicant's Motivation	Reviewers will assess the applicant's academic and research career plan; AND Benefits and intended outcomes to be achieved from the programme.	10
Track Record of Applicant	Reviewers will assess the candidate's potential to succeed based on past achievements AND Research outputs (e.g. the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents). The candidate's scholarly capabilities, leadership qualities and experience as reflected in the application and the supervisor's additional insights into the applicant's capabilities.	10
Research Proposal	Reviewers will assess the Scientific and technical quality of the proposal and the project contribution to new knowledge and new methodologies in the field; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The articulation, the appropriateness of/and the match between research aims and objectives;</li> <li>• The multidisciplinary aspects of the proposed study</li> </ul>	30
Project Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project organisation</li> <li>• Project scheduling</li> <li>• Budget</li> </ul>	Project organization refers to composition of project teams; their roles and responsibilities; the proposed research activities; and the supervision.  Project scheduling: work breakdown of the project to ensure that specific outcomes are achieved; as well as the objectives and associated timelines in place to divide the scope of work into manageable activities. Details of in country or international visits need to be included in the project schedule. In addition, applicants must provide a planned Programme of work which demonstrates how the proposed visit fits in with the applicant's research work plan.  Project budgeting refers to effective planning and budgeting of resources.	20
Postgraduate Supervision	Current postgraduate students supervised or planned supervision over the period of the programme.	10
Expected Outputs	This NRF recognized research outputs (e.g., the candidate's professional development; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; book chapters; patents). The achievability of the proposed outputs within the given timeframe.	10



## 7. Funding Support

### 7.1 Award and Period of funding

Successful applications will be awarded funding for a minimum of one (1) year and a maximum period of:

- Three (3) years for the Doctoral Track; and
- Two (2) years for the Postdoctoral Track.

The budget request for each year of the grant period should be submitted with the first application. The release of continuation funding for the second and third year will be linked to the applicant's progress. The continuing grant holder will be required to submit a detailed Progress Report (PR) to the NRF at the end of each academic year. Approved funding beyond the first year will only be released upon submission of the designated authority (DA) approved PR to the NRF.

### 7.2 Types of Financial Support

The Black Academics Advancement Programme will be funded within a set maximum amount range for each budget category, subject to budget availability. The grant is intended to fund three (3) distinct budget categories:

- **Running Expenses** to a maximum value of one hundred thousand Rand (R100 000). Running expenses must be motivated and may include projected costs for the budget line items listed below:
  - International Conferences
  - Materials and Supplies
  - Local Conferences
  - Local Travel
  - Research Equipment
  - Research/Technical/Ad Hoc Assistants ;
- **Lecturer replacement costs** (must be motivated with cost breakdown) during the time off period to a maximum value of two hundred thousand Rand (R200 000.00)
- **International travel** to a maximum value of one hundred thousand Rand (R100 000). This is only applicable to **Postdoctoral Track**.

#### **NRF Exclusions for Financial Support**

- Indirect costs (overheads);
- Registration fees for enrolment;
- Basic office equipment;
- General stationary, photocopying and printing costs;
- Journal publications, journal subscription costs and textbooks;
- Telephone, fax and internet costs;
- Personal laptops, computer hardware, and purchase or renewal of software licenses unless for specialised equipment and software licences.
- Any funding line that is listed as: "miscellaneous", "other" or "etc."
- Visa and permit fees;
- Events not attached to the conference;

- Presentation of the same work at multiple conferences; or
- Attendance of more than one conference abroad per year.
- Meetings, workshops, networking and collaboration event
- Administrative and/or secretarial support.
- Personal laptops, net books, hand-held notebooks, and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices.
- Licence fees or renewals of licences of non-specialised software (e.g. Ms Office)

Applicants with a disability as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA) may apply to the NRF for additional support for assistive devices following the approval of the grant award. An assistive technology device is *"any piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities"*.

## **8. Conditions of award for the Black Academics Advancement Programme**

- Successful applicants will be required to sign a Conditions of Grant (CoG) with the NRF and the university.
- Should the grantholder discontinue with the programme, the grantholder will inform the NRF in writing within 30 days prior to the exit of the programme. This grant is non-transferable and will be cancelled within 30 days from the receipt of written official notification by the NRF, should the grantholder discontinue with the programme.
- Should a grantholder discontinue or fail to successfully complete his or her Doctoral studies, resign from the employ of a South African public university or research institution or CSO before completion of their funded degree, or not finish his or her in-service payback period, he/she will be required to repay the full grant amount, or in the case of not finishing his or her in-service payback period pay a pro-rata grant amount, with zero percent interest to the NRF. Under such instances the grantholder will enter into an acknowledgement of debt with the NRF. This grant may not be held concurrently with any other NRF Thuthuka grant or scholarships.
- The grant may not be used for registration fees.
- This grant may be held with another NRF research grant, in accordance with the NRF multiple grants eligibility table.
- Applicants must spend 80% of their time each year on research related activities and, may not spend more than 20% of their time each year, on postgraduate teaching and supervision duties during the time off period.
- Grantholders registered for a doctoral degree will be required to provide proof of doctoral graduation within one (1) year of the completion of the period of programme.
- Postdoctoral candidates are expected to complete the programme within the two-year period.
- All grantholders must submit a Progress Report (PR) and a final report indicating the nature (e.g. journal article, book chapter, book) and quality (e.g. impact factor of journal) of outputs produced, grant applications prepared and/or submitted within one-year of completion of the three-year programme.
- Upon completion of the programme, grantholders will be required to continue working at any South African public university or research institution or, at a Civil Society

Organisation (CSO) for a maximum period of three (3) years or an equivalent period of the programme.

The maximum period for repayments will be equal to the duration of the grant and will start as soon as the discontinuation is registered with the NRF.

- There will be special provision made in the event of ill-health, maternity and bereavement leave. The grantholder shall inform the NRF no later than a week of any of these occurrences. The grant payment will be deferred while the individual is on paid maternity leave, or extended sick or special leave exceeding two calendar months.

## 9. Reporting

For continuous monitoring of progress, the grantholders will be required to submit the reports outlined below, in a format provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Conditions of Grant.

- Grantholders are required to submit a Progress Report (PR) on the NRF Online submission system.
- In cases of international visits where the grantholder is hosted by someone who is not their doctoral supervisor or Postdoctoral mentor, a report from the international host, must be submitted after each visit to the applicants' institution and attached to the PR submitted to the NRF.
- After the final visit by the visiting mentor, reports by both the host and the mentees must to be submitted to the institution and attached to the PR when submitting to the NRF.
- Doctoral grantholders will be required to provide proof of doctoral graduation within one (1) year of the completion of the period of the programme or doctoral degree in the case of a combined Doctoral and Postdoctoral grant.
- All grantholders will be required to submit a final report at the end of the two (2) - or three (3) - year funding period indicating the impact of the programme on the grantholders research track record and academic standing.
- Postdoctoral candidates are expected to complete within the two (2) - year period and must submit a final report indicating the nature (e.g. journal article, book chapter, and book) and quality (e.g. impact factor of journal) of outputs produced, grant applications prepared and/or submitted within one (1) - year of completion of the programme period.

## 10. Contact Details

When making an enquiry, please use “Black Academics Advancement Programme” as the email subject line.

**For funding instrument related enquiries, please contact:**

**Ms Maphuti Madiga**

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**For technical NRF online submission enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours from 08:00 to 16:30 from Monday to Friday.**

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