



**National
Research
Foundation**

GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

CALL FOR GRADUATE INTERNS FOR 2021-2022

Application and Funding Framework

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

Date: April 2020

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Objectives	5
3.	Eligibility Criteria for Host Institutions and Mentors.....	5
3.1	Eligibility Criteria for Host Institutions.....	5
3.2	Eligibility Criteria for Mentors	6
4.	Eligibility Criteria for Applicants for the Graduate Internship Programme.....	6
5.	Areas of Support for Honours Studies	7
6.	Application Process.....	7
8.	Acceptance onto the Graduate Internship Programme.....	8
9.	Contribution by the NRF and Host Institutions.....	10
9.1	NRF Funding.....	10
9.2	Contribution by Host Institutions	10
10.	Demographic Targets.....	10
11.	Conditions of Award.....	11
12.	Monitoring and Evaluation.....	11
13.	NRF Contact Details	12
14.	Annexure 1	13

1. Introduction

High-level skills development is critical for South Africa to compete in the knowledge-based economy. As a result, huge private and public sector investments have been made in tertiary education in recent years, while increased access to higher education institutions has been an important strategy of the South African government to create a more skilled labour force.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is a principal research funding agency of government. The mandate of the Foundation as set out in the NRF Act (Act 23 of 1998 as amended) is to (i) support, promote and advance research and human capacity development through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including humanities, social sciences and indigenous knowledge; (ii) develop, support and maintain national facilities; support and promote public awareness of, and engagement with, science; and (iv) promote the development and maintenance of the national science system and support government priorities. The NRF transformation agenda underpins how the organisation implements its granting function by prioritising transformation of: the equity profile of postgraduate students and researchers; the knowledge enterprise; the relationship between science and society; and the organisation itself.

Following a call for institutions to host graduate interns for the academic years 2021 to 2022, the NRF in partnership with the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) is launching a call for applications for graduate interns for the same period. The Graduate Internship Programme provides a unique platform for bachelor's graduates to receive real-life work experience as well as funding for them to pursue honours studies. Modalities of the programme are informed by two recent changes in the research and innovation landscape. Firstly, in 2018 the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) issued a directive for development programmes for people in the public service to be extended from 12 to 24 months. In addition, the NRF is implementing a new Postgraduate Funding Policy wherein postgraduate funding allocations will be underpinned by the principles of equity of opportunity; representivity; prioritisation; and enhanced access, success and throughput. This Postgraduate Funding Policy gives effect to the Ministerial guidelines, published in 2013, for improving equity in the distribution of DSI-NRF Bursaries and Fellowships. Citizenship, age, gender and disability will be considered in the allocation of funding, with transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core

objective. Financial need is, for the first time, included as a criterion for determining the level of funding.

The Graduate Internship Programme is a two-year work experience programme for bachelor's graduates who will be pursuing honours studies simultaneously during the internship period. In order to be accepted into the programme, prospective interns should also have been accepted into an honours programme. Mentors will interview and shortlist potential interns from this pool of students that have been accepted onto an honours programme. Host institutions will sign a two-year contract of appointment with the approved interns. In addition, interns' honours tuition fees will be funded by the NRF up to a maximum of R50 000 over the two-year internship and paid directly to the institution at which they are registered. The Graduate Internship Programme primarily targets students intending to register for an honours degree part-time. The NRF has published a separate call for full-time postgraduate (honours, masters and doctoral) funding for the 2021 academic year.

In general, graduate interns will be expected to report for duty during work hours and attend lectures outside of office hours and on weekends. How graduate interns split their time between undertaking work experience at the host institution and their honours studies must be negotiated directly with their mentors and captured in the work plan. The Graduate Internship Programme does not make it mandatory for interns to be registered for honours studies at the same institution hosting them as interns. However, logistically it will be impractical for an intern to be registered to study at a university that is located at a considerable distance from the host institution, especially if contact sessions are required for the honours degree.

In line with the new Postgraduate Funding Policy, interns who complete their honours studies within the minimum prescribed period and maintain their academic performance will be eligible for full-time master's funding from the NRF. The minimum academic year(s) prescribed by the Department of Higher Education and Training for the completion of a full-time and part-time honours qualification are one (1) year and two (2) years respectively.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Provide bachelors graduates with work experience, while pursuing part-time honours studies, within the broader Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines, as well as the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS);
- Establish a pool of skilled honours graduates for the private and public sector, including universities and research institutions;
- Effect transformation in the proportional representation of honours graduates from designated groups *viz.* black, female, financially needy and persons with disabilities; and
- Support postgraduate training to meet the specific needs of the country in partnership with the higher education system and industry.

3. Eligibility Criteria for Host Institutions and Mentors

Only those institutions that have responded to the NRF Call to Host Graduate Interns and that have been approved by the NRF as host institutions for the period 2021 to 2022 will be eligible to host Graduate Interns under this Call for Applications.

3.1 Eligibility Criteria for Host Institutions

To be eligible to participate in the Graduate Internship Programme, host institutions must meet the following requirements:

- Be legally registered in terms of South African laws and have a valid tax number;
- Be an NRF recognised university or research institution, or be registered on the Central Supplier Database (CSD) of the South African National Treasury;
- Have a fully functional Human Resource (HR) department with the capacity to pay the monthly stipends to interns;
- Allocate a suitably qualified mentor for each appointed intern;
- Provide workstations, computers and all other relevant resources that ensure an enabling work environment for each intern; and
- Provide an enabling work plan and environment for interns to successfully pursue their honours studies.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria for Mentors

To be eligible to participate in the Graduate Internship Programme, mentors must:

- Hold a permanent appointment or a fixed-term contract, for the full duration of the internship period, at their host institutions;
- Be willing to provide an enabling environment for interns to successfully pursue their honours studies, and
- Commit to providing mentorship and support to the interns for the full duration of the internship period.

4. Eligibility Criteria for Applicants for the Graduate Internship Programme

To be eligible to apply for the Graduate Internship Programme, individuals must:

- Be South African citizens in possession of a valid South African Identity Document (ID);
- Have completed a bachelor's degree in any SET, HSS or related disciplines prior to commencement of the internship;
- Have obtained a minimum of 65% for major subjects in the final undergraduate year of study;
- Intending to pursue honours studies over the two-year internship;
- Students intending to pursue full-time honours programmes **will only be eligible if all lectures and practical sessions are held in the late afternoon and/or on weekends**. Applicants must provide a timetable and letter of support from Faculty Deans confirming that the structure of the honours programme is conducive to being undertaken simultaneously with the internship programme.
- Have been funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) for their bachelor's degree; and
- Be 27 years of age or younger on 31 December of the year of application for the Graduate Internship.

The following candidates are **not eligible to apply**:

- Candidates who have not previously been funded by the NSFAS or ISFAP for their bachelor's degree;
- Candidates who intend to register for a postgraduate diploma qualification;

- Candidates who hold a National Diploma; a bachelor honours, BTech or master's degree; as well as those who are studying towards a master's degree;
- Previous beneficiaries of the DST-NRF Internship Programme; and
- Students registered for the second year of their honours studies in 2021.

5. Areas of Support for Honours Studies

The Graduate Internship Programme supports interns to receive training and work experience in all areas of Science, Engineering, Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities.

6. Application Process

All applicants must first identify the university where they will be registered for their honours degree before submitting an application to the NRF. All applications for the Graduate Internship Programme must be submitted on the NRF Online Submission System by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. To complete the online application template, follow the steps below:

- Register / Login using your ID number and password on the NRF Online Submission System;
- Click on “My Applications” and select “Create Application”.
- Select the Call for which you are applying viz. Internship Programme – Applicants 2021.
- Specify the university at which you intend to register for part-time honours studies.
- Ensure that you attach all the required documents.
- To continue working on the same application which has been saved on the system, please go to “My Applications”, “List of Applications”.
- Ensure that all sections of the application have been completed before selecting “**Final Submit**” for your application to be submitted to the university Designated Authority (DA).

7. Attachments

Applicants must attach the following documents in the attachment section of the online application:

- A certified copy of their South African ID must be attached under the Registration Details section of the online application template.
- An official academic record on the university letterhead.
- A timetable and letter of support from Faculty Deans confirming that the structure of the honours programme is conducive to being undertaken simultaneously with the internship programme.
- Applicants with outstanding fees are required to attach an official letter from the university confirming their first year of registration for the degree and indicating that the student still has outstanding fees owed to the university.
- Applicants with disabilities must upload a medical certificate, in support of the disability.
- Applicants who were previously supported by NSFAS or by ISFAP must attach proof in the form of an official university stamped financial statement or signed agreement with NSFAS or ISFAP.

Incomplete applications that do not include all the required information will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

8. Acceptance onto the Graduate Internship Programme

Universities will firstly consider all applications for admittance onto the honours programme and only applications that are recommended for honours funding by the university will be considered for the Graduate Internship by host institutions. Final approval for the funding for honours studies and for the Graduate Internship placement at the host institution will be done by the NRF. The timelines for the activities are presented in Table 1 and the sequence of activities will be as outlined below.

8.1 Recommendation by universities for NRF honours funding

- Applications submitted on the NRF Online Submission System will be screened for eligibility by the DAs at the respective university. The cut-off date for students to submit applications will be set by each university and applicants must abide by those dates.

- Universities will assess submitted applications using the standardised NRF review scorecard for honours applications (see Annexure 1).

The DAs at universities will then submit the list of eligible and recommended applicants, along with their final marks to the NRF. **Interviews by mentors and NRF approval**

- Mentors will interview and shortlist potential interns from the pool of students that have been accepted onto an honours programme and recommended to the NRF for funding for honours studies.
- Following the interviews conducted by mentors at host institutions, the DAs at host institutions will submit a consolidated list of nominees for the Graduate Internship Programme to the NRF for approval.
- The NRF will approve nominated candidates in line with the set equity targets.

Table 1: Timelines for the Call for Applications for Graduate Interns

Activity	Completion date
Publish call for applications for the 2021 academic year	06 April 2020
Students' submission cut-off dates	Set by Universities
University DA validation of eligible honours applications	01 September 2020
University review using NRF scorecard for honours applications	Set by Universities
University DA submits list of students accepted into an honours programmes, with final undergraduate marks to the NRF	18 December 2020
Mentors at host institutions access CV, interview and shortlist applicants	15 January 2021
Host institution DA submits consolidated list of nominated interns to the NRF for approval	18 January 2021
Host institution appointment of approved interns and NRF bursary award	29 January 2021 (for interns commencing on 01 February) and 26 February 2021 (for interns commencing on 01 March)

9. Contribution by the NRF and Host Institutions

9.1 NRF Funding

- Interns will receive a tax free stipend of R72 840 per annum for two (2) years.
- Interns will also receive funding for honours tuition fees, up to a maximum of R50 000 over the two-year internship. Tuition fees will be paid directly to the institution at which the student is registered for honours studies. In this context, tuition fee is the agreed institutional fee for the actual programme of study. The registration fee is to be included in the tuition fee. Qualifying NRF-funded students are not required to pay the registration fee upfront.

9.2 Contribution by Host Institutions

- Host institutions will appoint interns and include them on their payroll to enable payment of the monthly stipends.
- The overhead costs associated with the management of interns will be covered by Host Institutions.
- A suitably qualified mentor will be appointed for each intern.
- Host Institutions will provide workstations, computers and all other relevant resources that ensure an enabling work environment for each intern.

10. Demographic Targets

In line with the national imperatives for equity and redress, the programme will be for South African citizens and South African permanent residents with a valid SA ID number and is expected to achieve the following equity targets:

- 55% women
- 90% Black (African, Coloured and Indian)
- 10% White
- 1% students with disabilities

11. Conditions of Award

Full details of the Conditions of Award are detailed in the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG) that will be forwarded at the time of the award.

- Successful applicants who are offered a Graduate Internship by the NRF are required to complete and return the signed CoG by the specified date.
- Host institutions must sign a two-year contract appointment with the approved interns.
- Nominees approved for the Internship and honours studies by the NRF must register for the approved honours studies.
- The signed CoG must be submitted together with the signed Intern-Host Institution appointment contract and proof of registration for the honours degree.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

The NRF will continuously monitor the progress of the Graduate Internship Programme as follows:

- All interns will be required to submit Bi-annual Progress Reports on the NRF Online Submission System on the dates indicated in the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG).
- An annual work plan for the two-year duration of the internship must be developed and submitted *via* the NRF Online Submission System. Mentors are required to involve their interns in the development of the work plan.
- A quarterly assessment of interns' performance must be completed and submitted by both the mentor and intern on the NRF Online Submission System; and
- On an ongoing basis, the NRF will undertake online surveys as well as institutional visits and focus group discussions which will be conducted at the host institutions.

13. NRF Contact Details

For technical enquiries relating to the NRF Online Submission System, please contact the Support Desk (Mondays to Fridays from 08h00 to 16h30) on:

Tel: 012 481-4202 or E-mail: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za.

For any other programme related enquiries refer to the contact people in the table below:

Query	Contact Person	Contact Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSD Registration;• Allocation of internships to Host Institutions;• Approving of Internships for students;• Monitoring and evaluation.	Mr Sello Raseruthe	Telephone: 012 481 4388 E-mail: sello.raseruthe@nrf.ac.za
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly attendance registers• General inquiries	Ms Kgomotso Mthimunye	Telephone: 012 481 4016 Email: kgomotso.mthimunye@nrf.ac.za
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional claims for interns' stipends; and• Payment of tuition fees	Ms Mapula Kekana	Telephone: 012 481 4049 Email: mapula.kekana@nrf.ac.za

Annexure 1

Table 2: Review Scorecard for applicants for NRF honours funding

Review Criteria/Weight	Description	Four Point Rating Scale, Weight and Descriptor			
		3 = Excellent	2 = Good	1= Average	0 =Below average
1. Academic merit (40%)	Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final-year undergraduate courses.	75% and above	70-74%	65-69%	64% and below
2. Completion time for undergraduate degree (40%)	Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree.	Minimum prescribed period*	Minimum prescribed period + 6 months	Minimum prescribed period + 12 months	Minimum prescribed period + 2 years
3. Priority Research Area (20%)	Research aligned with one of the NRF listed research priority areas.	Yes	-	-	Not an NRF priority area

*The minimum academic year(s) prescribed by the Department of Higher Education and Training for the completion of a full-time and part-time honours qualification are one (1) year and two (2) years respectively.