



POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW (PDRF) POLICY

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¹ Amendment approval must be by the same structure that approved the initial Policy.

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1. Introduction

The opportunity to carry out postdoctoral studies within a research environment at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) can significantly enhance an individual's education and provide a career furthering opportunity while making significant contributions to the research and mission of the University. Postdoctoral Research Fellowships provide postdoctoral research fellow (PDRF) candidates with a platform through which they can develop their careers as academic researchers. This policy aims to provide guidelines for the management of relationships between PDRFs, their hosts, and the University.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the policy is to describe the terms and conditions underpinning the postdoctoral research fellowship programme at UJ. It details a framework within which the appointment, hosting, extension, termination and exit of PDRFs are managed at UJ. This policy applies to scholars appointed as PDRFs, their hosts, as well as the relevant support divisions (e.g., Postgraduate School (PGS), Student Finance, International Office). This Policy is intended for internal use only and must be read in conjunction with the SARS Tax Administration Act (<https://www.sars.gov.za/legal-counsel/tax-administration/>), the Income Tax Act 58 of 1962 (<https://www.gov.za/documents/income-tax-act-29-may-1962-00002>), the Immigration Act (13 of 2002), Immigration Regulations of 2014 and associated updates in these Acts and Regulations (<https://www.gov.za/documents/immigration-act>), the UJ PDRF Agreement, as well as other UJ policies, procedures and protocols relevant to this policy.

3. Principles and Values

The PDRF policy is in accordance with:

- 3.1 The University's mission, vision, values, and strategic objectives.
- 3.2 The relevant legal requirements set by the South African government policy and regulations on higher education, immigration, and tax.
- 3.3 Important national and international trends that may affect the PDRF policy and, in such a case, UJ will align the policy with these trends as far as such alignment positively influences activities, and research is conducted in an ethical manner with strict adherence to the UJ ethical standards and policy.

4. Aims/Objectives

The PDRF programme at UJ aims to:

- 4.1 Provide PDRFs the opportunity to strengthen their research skills and postgraduate supervision.
- 4.2 Enable UJ the opportunity to expand its research capability through increased research outputs (publications, books, patents).
- 4.3 Provide UJ the opportunity to expand on existing research and ideas and to pursue new lines of research.
- 4.4 Develop knowledge for stakeholders, such as the government, business, industry, and social communities.
- 4.5 Develop and maintain national and international research networks and collaborations.
- 4.6 Develop leadership skills among PDRFs by involving them in administrative and decision-making processes related to research.

² For a version of the Income Tax Act which integrates all the amendments introduced since in a single document, please refer to <https://lawlibrary.org.za/akn/za/act/1962/58/eng%402022-03-01>

5. Terminology

Unless the context indicates the contrary, the terms below shall bear the following meanings:

5.1	Conditions of Award (CoA)	Conditions of the fellowship. Specific and approved conditions of the award govern all PDRF awards. The academic activities of the PDRF will be described in the CoA.
5.2	Conflict of Interest	Occurs when there is a direct or indirect conflict, in fact or in appearance, between the interests of employees, agents or members of an organisation. It will apply to financial, economic, and other interests in any opportunity from which the organisation may benefit, as well as the use of the property of the organisation, including information.
5.3	Contract/ Agreement	The agreement between UJ (or another external institution linked to the funding source) and the PDRF. The agreement defines the expectations of each party as it pertains to the fellowship.
5.4	Department	An academic department, centre, or institute at the university where the PDRF is registered.
5.5	DHA	Department of Home Affairs.
5.6	Fellowship	The grant or stipend awarded to the PDRF for his/her expenses for the duration of the PDRF's total research period. These grants may be provided from different sources.
5.7	Funder	An entity that provides funding for the PDRF contract.
5.8	HOD/HOS	The head of the academic department or relevant individuals of authority (e.g. HOD/Vice-Dean/Dean/Executive Dean/Director) where the PDRF is registered.
5.9	Host	A senior academic staff member with a doctorate (senior lecturer and above) in an academic department, centre, or institute at the university can act as host and mentor to the PDRF. (Note: Should a lecturer with a PhD want to act as a host, a letter of motivation from the lecturer concerned must be submitted to the relevant Dean for approval).
5.10	Intellectual Property	Any copyright and ancillary and supplementary rights, technical or commercial information, including, without limitation, computer software, documentation, drawings, designs, improvements, inventions, patents, developments, additions, trademarks, industrial designs and models, techniques, know-how, production development and research, all technical, scientific, theoretical, processing and principles, marketing, promoting, financing, engineering, manufacturing, distributing and transporting, testing and controlling, integratable techniques, technologies, data systems and processes, methodologies, trade secrets as well as undisclosed inventions, registered and unregistered patents, trademarks and designs, whether such material is registered or unregistered, and irrespective of whether such material is capable of such registration.
5.11	NRF	National Research Foundation, a statutory intermediary agency between the policies and strategies of the Government of South Africa and South Africa's research institutions.

5.12	PDRF	Individuals who are not employees of the University and, therefore, cannot qualify for any UJ employee benefits. They must have recently completed a doctorate and are able to continue their postdoctoral studies in a particular field of expertise to enhance their knowledge and intellect. The guideline for the individual's completion of the doctorate is within the last 5 years. (Note: wherever PDRF is mentioned hereon, it is linked to this definition).
5.13	SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority. (Note: Any PDRF that has obtained their doctoral qualification at an international institution must obtain SAQA accreditation before submitting the transcripts with their application or concurrently submit the SAQA application for accreditation as proof with the other supporting documents).
5.14	SARS	South African Revenue Service. (Note: SARS has entered a binding class ruling with Universities South Africa (USAf), which prescribes the overall management of the PDRF sector).
5.15	UJ Rules	Rules, regulations, policies, procedures, practices and standing orders as approved by UJ Senate or Council (including their subcommittees) or both and as amended from time to time.
5.16	University or UJ	Refers to the University of Johannesburg.
5.17	URC	University Research Committee of UJ.
5.18	USAf	Universities South Africa. (Note: USAf represents all the public universities in South Africa. The trading name of public universities South Africa (previously known as Higher Education South Africa).

6. Stakeholders

- 6.1 The Executive Director: Research and Innovation, Senior Director: Strategic Initiatives and Administration, in consultation with the Senior Director: Postgraduate School and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation are responsible for the provision of research support and exercising institutional-level responsibilities, and function in accordance with relevant university policies and regulations.
- 6.2 All relevant individuals of authority (e.g. HOD/Vice-Dean/Dean/Executive Dean/Director) and the hosts are responsible for the management of the fellowship.
- 6.3 There are three main stakeholders that fulfil various roles and execute specific responsibilities for the PDRF programme, namely (a) the PDRF, (b) the host, and (c) the UJ.
- 6.4 Roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder are detailed in the UJ PDRF Agreement.

7. Conditions for PDRF Eligibility

- 7.1 A PDRF host must be identified and confirmed before and/or during the application process.
- 7.2 A PDRF must be a recent doctoral graduate (as defined in Table 1, 5.12) who has approved internal or external funding (the NRF, the Medical Research Council, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Friedland Trust, the Percy Fox Scholarship, etc.). (Note: internal funding is secured by the host prior to the PDRF appointment, while the candidate may secure external funding through the various organisations indicated above).
- 7.3 A UJ PDRF must have completed all requirements towards the PhD degree. Where the degree has not been conferred, he/she must provide the documents certifying that the thesis has been approved in its final form, including all necessary signatures, and indicate the date

that the degree will be conferred (in the case of UJ, SHDC).

- 7.4 An external candidate applying for a PDRF must produce a letter confirming the successful completion of the PhD and the upcoming graduation date.
- 7.5 A PDRF must not be in full-time employment at the time of taking up the fellowship and for the duration of the fellowship.

8. Funding

- 8.1 Funding for the programme is provided by the University and external funders, such as national organisations, international funding organisations and corporate companies.
- 8.2 Each source of funding will have specific conditions; however, the UJ PDRF Agreement will bind the PDRF in terms of UJ conditions for the duration of the fellowship. The onus is on the host academic to ascertain sufficient funding from a bona fide bursary source for the PDRF.
- 8.3 An agreed-upon amount for the fellowship will be paid as a monthly stipend to the PDRF.
- 8.4 After receipt of the fellowship, any expenses on the PDRF account will be the sole responsibility of the PDRF. The University will not take responsibility for offsetting any outstanding balance at the end of the tenure.
- 8.5 The PDRF and/or hosts are required to inform the Postgraduate School PDRF Coordinator when a PDRF terminates their tenure at the University prior to the contract ending (see 16.3).

9. Top-ups

- 9.1 Where an application for funds is made from a contract research account for a postdoctoral research fellowship or top-up thereof, the contract must clearly identify funding as that of a “postdoctoral research fellowship”. Such funds may not be earmarked for “services rendered”, and where such a case does present, the Postgraduate School PDRF coordinator must be furnished with the relevant UJ cost centre number for verification and auditing purposes.
- 9.2 Amounts that exceed the amount stipulated in the Letter of Award should not be in contravention of any specific bursary award conditions (as stipulated, for example, in an NRF bursary award, or any bursary award conditions as stipulated in the University’s policies). Amendments to the bursary amount which increase payments must be accompanied by a formal letter from the host specifying the amendment.
- 9.3 Any ad hoc (“top-up”) amounts that are not specified in the Letter of Award or similar updated document are taxable and must be paid via the sundry payment system, and not via the Postgraduate School PDRF Coordinator and the bursary system.

10. Remuneration for Additional Work

- 10.1 As bursary recipients, PDRFs may not do any additional work related to their research in return for payment, e.g. contract research. Where extra work is permitted in terms of the bursary scheme, the following criteria must be adhered to:

Hours: Up to 12 hours per week of additional paid work (including all time spent on preparatory work) may be undertaken at UJ only.

Rate: At the discretion of the host and in accordance with the UJ tariff list as provided by Human Capital Management (HCM).

- 10.2 The applicable rate must be paid via the UJ salary system (temporary appointment) and not utilising the PDRF bursary system. These payments are taxable in accordance with the prevailing tax legislation.
- 10.3 PDRFs are not obliged to give lectures to students. Should they wish to lecture briefly to gain

experience, this should be on a voluntary basis up to a maximum of 12 hours per week (e.g., as part of the additional work for which they may be remunerated), but this should in no way constitute part of the basic teaching provisioning of a department. Refer to 10.2 regarding the payment procedure.

- 10.4 If the PDRF is regarded as an employee by virtue of performing additional duties as described in points 10.1 to 10.3 above, the PDRF will be required to sign a declaration which provides that they will have to repay any award amount received should they fail to complete that fellowship for any reason other than death, ill-health or injury.

11. Tax Implications

- 11.1 SARS made a binding class ruling for a period of 5 years in terms of section 78(3) of the Tax Administration Act 28 of 2011 (TA ACT), (“the Binding Class Ruling”). In terms of the Binding Class Ruling, the awards granted by universities to a PDRF must meet all the statutory requirements of a bona fide bursary as contemplated in Section 10(1)(q) of the aforesaid Act. By virtue of its nature, payments made to the PDRF in terms of this Policy, are made in the form of a bursary and are therefore non-taxable.
- 11.2 If a PDRF is a relative of an employee at the University of Johannesburg, the PDRF award will only be exempt from normal tax to the extent that the specific provisions of section 10(1)(q)(ii) of the Income Tax Act, 58 of 192 have been met.
- 11.3 PDRFs are personally responsible for ensuring that they do not violate their bursary or visa conditions concerning additional funding.

12. Advertising, Selection and Award

- 12.1 The host is allowed to advertise the PDRF opportunity to comply with the SARS regulations governing “open bursaries” and the existing university policy for the payment of bursaries.
- 12.2 The advertisement must be placed in at least one public forum other than the University’s intranet or internal electronic bulletin board to attract applications from PDRF candidates from other universities. Copies of advertisements must be retained for record-keeping purposes as per the UJ retention schedule.
- 12.3 The University will advertise all opportunities for fellowships to ensure the process is fair and transparent. All University policies on non-discrimination must be upheld to ensure the sourcing of broad and inclusive selection pools.
- 12.4 Depending on the nature of the award, selection and recruitment of applicants must be done by all relevant stakeholders. In all cases, such selection must consider requirements stipulated in this Policy to ensure that the prospective PDRF is compliant.
- 12.5 In reviewing applications, the constituted panel must take into consideration the following:
- 12.5.1 Evidence of ability to publish, especially publication track record.
 - 12.5.2 Evidence of an intellectually sound research direction.
 - 12.5.3 Evidence of the ability of the host to provide necessary mentoring and guidance.
 - 12.5.4 Evidence of the ability of the department/centre/other entity to provide computing facilities and an environment conducive to full-time research.
 - 12.5.5 Availability of funds to host the PDRF.
- 12.6 During the selection process, it must be ensured that the proposed candidate holds, or will soon hold, an appropriate doctoral degree and has an extended research track record or proof of research capabilities if a recent graduate (e.g., publication record and has experience of delivering papers at conferences). At the time of award, the candidate should meet the eligibility criteria.
- 12.7 Where applicable and necessary, the interviewing and the finalisation of an appropriate candidate should be a process conducted by a constituted panel consisting of various stakeholders, including academic and research members within the host departments and

members of management and administration within the University.

- 12.8 Once the selection process is completed, the relevant individuals of authority (e.g., HOD/Vice-Dean/Dean/Executive Dean/Director) must sign the required and relevant documentation:
 - UJ PDRF Fellowship Admission Application Form
 - UJ PDRF Application for Approval of Funding Form
 - UJ PDRF Fellowship Agreement Form
- 12.9 Once the acceptance is issued, contracting ensues between the host and the PDRF regarding expectations for the year.
- 12.10 PDRFs will be registered as research fellows and will be issued access card different to those of UJ employees which will enable them to access to various facilities within UJ.
- 12.11 In the case of an international PDRF candidate, the Letter of Award must include relevant documentation to be sent to the selected candidate, providing details of the assistance offered by UJ International Office.
- 12.12 International PDRFs must apply for the appropriate visas to do research or take academic sabbaticals in South Africa.

13. Fellowship Agreement

- 13.1 A PDRF must complete and sign a PDRF Agreement.
- 13.2 The PDRF together with the host must also complete a workplan, which outlines the general conditions of the award and a framework of how the research will be undertaken. The workplan will act as an annexure to the PDRF agreement.
- 13.3 The agreement is legally binding and must be signed by the PDRF, host, and by the relevant individuals of authority (e.g., HOD/Vice-Dean/Dean/Executive Dean/Director).
- 13.4 The agreement does not constitute an offer of employment nor imply that an employment offer shall be made in the future.
- 13.5 The agreement will protect and provide recourse to both parties in the event of a dispute, complaint, or conflict of interest.

14. Fellowship Tenure

- 14.1 Fellowship tenure can vary depending on the type of grant (internal vs external) that funds the fellowship.
- 14.2 PDRFs are typically awarded for a period of up to two (2) years commencing from the first date of appointment by UJ, which is always subject to the availability of funds.

15. Fellowship Renewal

- 15.1 Renewal of fellowships beyond the 2 years is based on satisfactory research productivity as measured against the signed agreement pertaining to the research and availability of funds.
- 15.2 The PDRF agreement may be renewed if the host and other relevant individuals of authority (e.g., HOD/Vice-Dean/Dean/Executive Dean/Director) at their sole and absolute discretion, are satisfied with the PDRF's performance.
- 15.3 The PDRF must complete the renewal documents relating to research outputs and proposed plans three months before the expiration of the first year for renewal consideration for the second year.
- 15.4 A review meeting, involving relevant individuals of authority and the PDRF may be convened to consider the renewal of the fellowship if and when required, especially in the cases of underperformance.
- 15.5 The renewal of the PDRF's fellowship will be dependent on, but is not limited to, the following conditions:
 - 15.5.1 Satisfactory progress with the PDRF's research project(s) and research output(s)

as determined by the host and the relevant individuals of authority.

15.5.2 Availability of funds

- 15.6 Beyond three years (fourth and fifth year), a renewal may only be considered under exceptional circumstances – the host is required to submit a letter of motivation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Internationalisation through the Postgraduate School before the end of the third year of the PDRF for approval.
- 15.7 A PDRF may not hold a position funded from internal sources successively (for example, a URC fellowship for the full three years followed by a Global Excellence Stature (GES) fellowship for another three years).

16. Fellowship Termination

- 16.1 A PDRF's tenure ends at the specified period unless renewal has been approved by the University.
- 16.2 The registration of a PDRF may be cancelled at any time due to a material breach of contract (full-time employment concurrent with the PDRF contract, poor performance at the discretion of the host) and/or following a hearing, or on disciplinary grounds.
- 16.3 In cases where the PDRF chooses to terminate the fellowship prior to the end of the tenure, he/she is required to complete the UJ PGS PDRF termination form for one calendar month prior (30 days' notice).

17. Complaints and Disputes

- 17.1 A PDRF who believes that they are being treated unfairly has access to avenues to seek resolution.
- 17.2 The PDRF should refer to the UJ website for guidance on relevant policies and procedures to lodge a complaint.
- 17.3 Any complaints raised on bullying, harassment, sexual violence (or similar) can be guided by the UJ Policy on [Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Rape](#) for resolution.
- 17.4 In the event of any disputes that may arise out of or in connection with the PDRF agreement, the parties shall in the first instance, promptly refer the complaint to their respective host to facilitate a resolution of the dispute; should the parties be unable to facilitate a resolution of the dispute within ten (10) business days, the complaint must be escalated to the relevant individuals of authority (e.g., HOD/Vice-Dean/Dean/Executive Dean/Director). If there is still no resolution, the complaint must be referred to the Senior Director: Postgraduate School, for deliberation.

18. Development and Review

- 18.1 A critical goal of UJ's research fellowship is for the candidates to gradually become independent researchers who can conduct research, publish their research findings, and obtain research grants.
- 18.2 PDRFs must receive regular and substantive feedback on their research progress throughout the tenure based on what was agreed during contracting between the PDRF and the host (refer to Section 11 in the Fellowship Agreement). Given that disciplines in UJ may have differing expectations for research productivity, the minimum standard for UJ is that two (2) research output units be published per annum per PDRF.
- 18.3 A brief progress report must be submitted to the Postgraduate School by the host academic every three months (in the case of UJ-funded PDRFs) or six months (in the case of external funding paid to UJ twice a year). The reports provide a record of research done. The ongoing payment of monthly stipends is contingent on the submission of these progress reports.
- 18.4 These reports are further required annually for the continuation of external funding to the University of Johannesburg,

19. Professional Development

- 19.1 A PDRF is an emerging researcher; the CoA and the PDRF host agreement must describe the type of training and nature of work to be done by the PDRF.
- 19.2 In addition to this, the University may, from time to time, provide professional development courses and seminars to assist the PDRFs.
- 19.3 The PDRFs may organise seminars and training among themselves or for senior students in their areas of research, and such events can be hosted and accommodated by the Postgraduate School.
- 19.4 A PDRF is allowed to provide co-supervision to master's students (without remuneration) in accordance with clause 6.5 (p. 9) as contained in the UJ Higher Degrees Administration Policy (September 2022). This co-supervision must be administratively recorded as evidence in terms of the professional development of the PDRF.
- 19.5 Reference must be made to the UJ Higher Degrees Administration Policy ([Higher Degrees Administration.pdf](#)) for guidelines on how PDRFs can be involved in the co-supervision of a PhD student and/or supervision of a master's or PhD student.

20. Intellectual Property

- 20.1 Intellectual Property (IP) from all PDRF projects will be owned by the University. The UJ Intellectual Property Policy must be referred to for all IP-related cases.
- 20.2 A PDRF must be familiar with and follow all University policies, guidelines, and procedures, especially those pertaining to the University's research compliance programme, including those regarding auditing, conflict of interest, freedom of information, research misconduct, responsible conduct, intellectual property and data retention and access.

21. Review of Policy

The Policy will be reviewed every 5 years or earlier if required.

Version History

Approval Body	Approval Date
Senate	14 March 2024