Framework

NRF Honours and final year B Tech Bursaries for 2020

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

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1. Background and Rationale

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation of the honours and final year Bachelor of Technology (B Tech) bursaries for (i) National Research Foundation (NRF) Freestanding Bursaries; (ii) Innovation Bursaries which includes the Department of Science and Technology (DST) priority research areas and NRF-Sasol bursaries; (iii) the Scarce Skills Bursaries supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) through the National Skills Fund (NSF); (iv) bursaries for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) undergraduate-funded students; and (v) bursaries for students with a disability. These funding instruments are funded by the NRF core grant allocation from National Treasury; the DST (DST/CON 0145/2017); and the DHET.

The NRF is mandated by an Act of Parliament, the National Research Foundation Act (Act No. 23 of 1998) to: "*Support and promote research through funding, human capacity development and the provision of the necessary research facilities, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge*".

In support of this mandate, the NRF makes funds available to support honours and final year B Tech students for the 2020 academic year in the form of bursaries. The bursaries for qualifying applicants, are released to South African public universities depending on the availability of the budget as well as in line with the Ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DST-NRF Bursaries and Fellowships (Ministerial Guidelines on Bursaries and Fellowships, 2013).

In addition, the NRF provides support for students with disabilities at all levels of study. A **person with disabilities** is defined according to The Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities and the Employment Equity Act, (Act No 55 of 1998). The act states that: only people who satisfy all the criteria in the definition: (i) long-term or recurring; (ii) having a physical or mental impairment; (iii) which substantially limits, are considered as persons with disabilities.

According to the published *High Education Qualification Framework* as set out in the Schedule as policy in terms of the section 3 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), the Bachelor honours Degree (NQF Level 8) is a postgraduate specialisation qualification, characterised by the fact that it prepares students for research based postgraduate study. In addition, programmes must include conducting and reporting research under supervision, worth at least 30 credits, in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study.

In contrast, a Postgraduate Diploma (NQF Level 8) is generally multi- or interdisciplinary in nature but may serve to strengthen and deepen the student's knowledge in a particular discipline or profession. The primary purpose of the qualification is to enable working professionals to undertake advanced reflection and development by means of a systematic survey of current thinking, practice and research methods in an area of specialisation. A sustained research project is not required, but the qualification may include conducting and reporting research under supervision. It is against this backdrop that the NRF has taken a strategic decision not to fund Postgraduate Diplomas, because it does not meet the requirements for this programme.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the honours and final year B Tech bursaries are to:
- Support the development of a critical mass of globally competitive human resources in prioritised knowledge areas;
- Promote the advancing of science, research and innovation;
- Contribute towards the increase in the number and quality of South African postgraduate students (honours and final year B Tech) in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering and (iii) Technology and in the (iv) Social Sciences and (v) Humanities;
- Build a pipeline of the next generation of skilled scientists and researchers in South Africa;

- Effect transformation in the proportional representation of postgraduate students from designated groups *viz.* black, female and persons with disabilities ; and
- Support the development of postgraduate training to meet the specific needs of the country in conjunction with the higher education sector and industry.

3. Areas of Support

3.1 NRF Freestanding

The bursary is intended to support full-time honours and final year B Tech candidates to pursue research studies in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering and (iii) Technology and in the (iv) Social Sciences and (v) Humanities, at public universities in South Africa. The percentage of supported students will be 80% from the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines and 20% from the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

3.2 Innovation (including DST Priority Research Areas)

The Innovation Bursary Scheme which also includes priority research areas* supports students who wish to pursue their honours and final year B Tech studies in the fields listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Innovation (including DST Priority Research Areas) supported for Honours and final year B Tech Bursaries.

Astronomy	Bioinformatics*	Biotechnology	Cellular and Molecular Biology
Chemistry	Climate Change*	Computer science	Drug Discovery and Development*
Earth Sciences	Earth Observation*	Ecology	Engineering
Functional Genomics*	Global Change, Society and Sustainability*	Indigenous Knowledge Systems*	Mathematical Sciences
Material Sciences	Marine Sciences*	Medicinal Plant *	Medical sciences
Nanotechnology*	Nuclear Science	Nuclear Technologies in Medicine and Biosciences*	Palaeosciences*
Physics	Renewable Energy*	Social Science and Humanities	Space Science*

DST Priority Research Areas*

The percentage of supported students will be 80% from SET and 20% from the SSH disciplines.

3.3 Scarce Skills Bursaries and NSFAS Pipeline

The DHET managed National Skills Fund, supports full-time students that received NSFAS funding for their undergraduate studies and who wish to pursue their honours and final year B Tech studies in the fields listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Honours and final year B Tech qualifications eligible for Scarce Skills Bursaries and NSFAS pipeline postgraduate funding.

Accounting	Actuarial Studies	Agriculture	Architecture
Auditing	Biotechnology	Business Management	Chemistry
Computer Science	Demography	Economics	Engineering
Forestry	Financial Management	Geology	Health Science
Information Systems	Mathematical Sciences	Physical Sciences	Statistics
Sport Science	Transportation Studies	Tourism	

Note that the Postgraduate Diplomas are not funded by the NRF.

3.4 Students with Disability

The bursary is intended to support honours and final year B Tech students with a physical or mental impairment, to pursue research degrees in all areas of (i) Science, (ii) Engineering and (iii) Technology and in the (iv) Social Sciences and (v) Humanities, at public universities in South Africa.

4. Eligible Applicants

The eligibility criteria listed below apply to all areas of support for Honours and final year B Tech Bursaries:

- Bursaries are open to South African citizens and South African permanent residents who will register at a South African public university in 2020 on a **full-time basis**.

5. Students not eligible

- Foreign nationals;
- Students that already hold an honours or final year B Tech degree;
- Students pursuing an undergraduate degree irrespective of the degree that they are enrolled for;
- Students intending to pursue a Postgraduate diploma qualification, including Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting; and
- Students who will be employed (full/part time) in 2020 will not be considered.

6. Application Process

Students must first identify the university where they will be registered for the honours or final year B Tech degree before submitting an application to the NRF. Applications for funding in 2020 must be submitted to the university where they intend to register, through the NRF Online Submission System by accessing the link: https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/. **Universities must set their own internal closing dates for screening of applications.**

Further instructions on the application process will be made available on the NRF honours and final year B Tech Application and Funding Guide for 2020.

7. Attachments

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

i. Certified South African Identity Document. (Should be uploaded under Registration details)

ii. Certified academic record or, in case of applicants with outstanding fees due to the university, attach an official letter that is stamped and signed, stating that the transcript is not issued due to outstanding fees owed to the university.

iii. Proof of NSFAS or University Financial Aid funding for applicants that have indicated that they were previously funded by NSFAS or received University Financial Aid funding.

iv. Applicants with disabilities must upload a medical certificate, in support of the disability.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the following:

- The application is completed in full;
- Observe institution's internal closing date; and
- University has received and evaluated their applications.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Each university will evaluate applications submitted by the students intending to study at the respective institution using the scorecard provided by the NRF (Table 3).

Table 3: Criteria for the assessment of applications for NRF Honours and final year B -Tech Bursaries

Criteria	Description	Weight
Academic Merit**	Average percentage for Major Subjects in final undergraduate year of study.	40%
Completion time for undergraduate Degree	Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree	40%
Priority Research Area	Research aligned with one of the NRF listed research priority areas*.	20%
Total		**100%**

**Students who received a "Pass" and have not entered a percentage pass mark will be given a default score of 1.

Applicants who have completed their degree must upload their final undergraduate degree percentage marks (to assess academic merit) and indicate the completion time for the degree on the NRF online system.

Applicants who have not completed their final year undergraduate degree must not complete; Academic Merit and Completion time for undergraduate Degree on the online application form. However, the universities must upload this information before the application is sent to the NRF for consideration.

Applicants who are applying to a different university must send their final year results to the Research/Postgraduate Office where they are intending to pursue the honours / final year B Tech degree.

9. Selection and Awarding Criteria

In all bursary categories, **priority** will be given to financially needy yet academically capable applicants who were previously funded by the NSFAS, NRF and/or University Financial Aid. **This does not exclude applicants who were not previously funded by NSFAS, NRF and/or University Financial Aid from receiving postgraduate funding from the NRF.**

Institutional Designated Authorities (DAs) must ensure that honours and final year B Tech applications submitted to the NRF by each institution meets the targets indicated in the Ministerial Guidelines, namely:

1. **Freestanding and Innovation Demographic targets for equity and redress for South African Citizens**
    a. **80%** Black Students (African, , Coloured, Indian /Asian South Africans);
    b. **55%** Female Students (African, Indian, Coloured, White);
    c. **4%** Students with a disability.
2. **Scarce Skills and NSFAS Pipeline Demographics targets for South African Citizens.**
    a. **85%** Black Students (African, Indian, Coloured);
    b. **55%** Female Students (African, Indian, Coloured, White);
    c. **4%** Students with disability.

Awarding Criteria

Awards must be made in the following order of priority:

1. Financially needy students (NSFAS or University Financial Aid).
2. Highest score as per the scorecard.

10. Student Selection and NRF Approval for Funding

Universities will use an online score card provided by the NRF to evaluate each application, to mark eligible applications for funding decision by the NRF. **The NRF will not approve students that did not submit an online application**.

11. Value of Support

The period of support for all bursaries is calculated from the first year of registration for the study, regardless of the years of NRF funding. The NRF does not fund the pre-registration year for postgraduate studies. The bursary support is for one (1) year only and is not renewable. Bursary values for full-time honours and final year B Tech students are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Bursary values for full-time Honours and final year B Tech students for 2020 academic year

Type of Bursary	Bursary value (per annum)	Maximum Funding period
NRF Freestanding	R30 000	1 year
DST Priority Research Areas	R60 000	
Current DST-NRF Interns		
Innovation Bursary Scheme		
Students with disability		
NRF-Sasol		
Scarce Skills		
NSFAS Postgraduate Pipeline	R76 000	

Assistive devices for students with disabilities

Bursary-holders with a disability may apply for additional funding for an assistive technology device of up to **R20 000**. This is the maximum amount allowed during the tenure of the bursary. As defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA), 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*".

12. Conditions of Award

- Successful applicants' who are offered the bursaries by the NRF are required to complete and sign the student agreement that will be forwarded at the time of the award.
- The bursary-holder may not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the bursary, however he/she will be allowed to undertake teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstration duties during the year of study, and he/she may be remunerated for his/her services rendered at the normal university tariff for services.
- All NRF bursary awards shall be held as primary funding towards the research study.
- Bursary-holders are allowed to hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to half the value of the NRF award. Alternatively, should the host university have an institutional capped value, the NRF award may be supplemented to the university capped value for the level of study.
- NRF bursaries may not be held simultaneously with a bursary from any other government or NRF administered source.
- The bursary-holder must obtain the degree for which the bursary was awarded by the contractual date which is within one (1) year after NRF funding has ceased, and must notify the NRF *via* the university DA.
- Should the bursary-holder not complete the degree for which the bursary was awarded, the total funds received must be returned to the NRF together with interest at the prevailing prime rate charged by the NRF bankers.

13. Financial Control

These awards will be managed in terms of standard NRF financial policies and procedures. The payment of the grant by the NRF to successful applicants will be administered by the Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate to the relevant institutions. The institution will in turn administer the funds on behalf of the successful applicant to the value of the full sum awarded by the NRF. **Bursaries not taken up by April of the year of award will be cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.**

14. NRF Contact Persons

For programme related enquiries, please contact:

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15. Relevant Strategies on National Priority Research Areas

1. http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/143-the-ten-year-plan-for-science-and-technology
2. http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/174-national-research-a-development-strategy-2002
3. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Science_Technology_White_Paper.pdf
4. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Bioeconomy%20Strategy_a.pdf
5. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/PALEO_STRATEGY_DST_Final_.pdf
6. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/DST_Nanotech_18012006_0.pdf
7. http://www.gov.za/document?search_query=strategy&field_gcisdoc_doctype=All&field_gcisdoc_subjects=518&start_date=&end_date=&=Search
8. http://www.gov.za/about-sa/science-technology