



Stellenbosch

UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
UNIVERSITEIT

SCIENCE

EYENZULULWAZI NGEZENDALO
NATUURWETENSKAPPE

Department of Botany and Zoology
Isebe leNzululwazi ngeZityalo neZilo
Departement Plant- en Dierkunde

Stellenbosch University Botany and Zoology PhD Excellence Bursary

Department of Botany and Zoology | Stellenbosch University

The Department of Botany and Zoology (BotZoo) at Stellenbosch University invites applications from exceptional local and international students for the BotZoo PhD Excellence Bursary. This prestigious bursary is designed to attract academically outstanding PhD candidates with the potential to become independent researchers and future leaders in the biological sciences.

What we offer

R200 000 per year for three years, with funding guaranteed for the full three-year PhD period subject to satisfactory academic progress.

The annual package comprises:

- R170 000 per year as a student bursary; and
- R30 000 that may be used for approved research and study-related expenses, including conference attendance, fieldwork costs, relocation expenses, computing equipment, specialist software, and approved research consumables.

The BotZoo bursary is primarily awarded as a stand-alone bursary. Applicants holding major external scholarships (e.g. NRF funding) are generally not eligible, although the selection committee may consider exceptional cases where additional support is justified.

Why BotZoo?

The Department of Botany and Zoology provides an exceptional environment for postgraduate research, bringing together internationally recognised researchers, diverse research expertise and strong national and international collaborations. Our research spans the breadth of biological sciences, and combinations of these fields:

- Biodiversity, ecology and conservation
- Evolution, systematics and phylogenetics
- Genomics, molecular biology and bioinformatics
- Animal and plant biology
- Marine and terrestrial biology
- Parasitology and disease ecology
- Environmental biology and global change

PhD students benefit from Stellenbosch University's world-class research environment, advanced research infrastructure and analytical facilities, as well as opportunities to collaborate with leading researchers and institutions in South Africa and internationally. PhD student responsibilities at Stellenbosch University include undertaking a doctoral research project and complete a doctoral thesis under guidance from supervisor(s). A doctoral student education typically includes developing diverse

methodological and quantitative skills, scientific writing and communication, critical thinking, theoretical understanding, and research independence.

Who should apply?

The bursary is open to outstanding local and international applicants with an excellent academic record and demonstrated potential for high-quality research. Students already registered for a PhD are not eligible.

Academic merit will be the primary selection criterion. Research experience will be considered favourably. Evidence may include publications, conference presentations, research reports, honours or master's theses, or other scholarly outputs. The fit between the applicant, PhD project and prospective research group will also be considered.

Prospective students must contact potential BotZoo supervisors before applying to discuss potential and/or available PhD projects, research interests and suitability for the respective research environment. A suitable project and supervisory environment must be identified before an application is submitted – for more detail visit <https://www.sun.ac.za/en/faculties/science/departments/botany-and-zoology/botany-and-zoology>

All applicants are expected to also apply for alternative sources of funding, preferably before applying for this bursary. Successful applicants will be required to apply for external funding opportunities such as NRF and PSP awards where eligible.

Application requirements

Applicants must submit:

1. **A comprehensive CV**, highlighting academic achievements and research experience together with names and contact details of at least two academic references;
2. **A certified full academic record**
3. **A one-page letter of motivation**, explaining your interest in the PhD and why you should be considered for the BotZoo PhD Excellence Bursary; and
4. **A letter from a prospective BotZoo PhD supervisor** endorsing the application and confirming their willingness to accept the applicant as a PhD student within their research group.

Important dates and submission

Closing date: 30 November 2026.

Funding outcomes: before **15 December 2026** (only successful applicants will be informed).

Starting date: Anytime between January and July 2027, subject to registration requirements.

Applications must be submitted to **Shula Johnson** at shulaj@sun.ac.za

Enquiries can be made to **Prof Conrad Matthee** at cam@sun.ac.za