Research Infrastructure Professionals Programme (RIPP)

Framework Document

Research and Innovation, Impact Support and Advancement (RIISA)

Date: July 2024

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List of Acronyms

PR	Progress Report
DAs	Designated Authorities
CF	Carry Forward
CoG	Conditions of Grant
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
HEI	Higher Education Institution
NRF	National Research Foundation
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HDIs	Historically Disadvantaged Institutions
RIs	Research Infrastructures
RIPP	Research Infrastructure Professionals Programme
RIISA	Research, Innovation and Impact Support and Advancement
STI	Science Technology and Innovation

1. Introduction

The mandate of the National Research Foundation (NRF) is to contribute towards national development by supporting, promoting and advancing research and human capacity development (HCD) through funding and provision of necessary research infrastructures (RIs) in order to facilitate knowledge creation, innovation and development in all fields of science. The NRF acknowledges that the knowledge generated by the research enterprise could improve the competitiveness of strategic sectors of the economy and improve the quality of life for the people of our country. The NRF also recognises the importance of a scientifically engaged society as an essential component for transitioning towards a knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, the development and retention of high-end scientific and technological skills and competencies, is of essence for South Africa to become a knowledge-based economy.

The White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation, 2019 (WP-STI) recognises research and innovation infrastructure as critical elements for encouraging both social and technological innovation, enhancing knowledge generation and providing advanced training for researchers. Underpinning STI excellence is the presence and access to well-maintained RIs that enable training of highly skilled researchers and cutting-edge research that results in new products and technologies. RIs further provides an enabling environment for researchers to improve their knowledge, scientific performance, and innovation outputs. The Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) through the STI Decadal Plan 2022-2023 aims to build an STI system that can improve impact on South Africa's socio-economic and environmental priorities. The Decadal Plan will implement the vision of the 2019 WP-STI thereby enabling an inclusive and sustainable development of South Africa in the evolving world. The plan accentuates the STI priorities that are aligned with key sectors of the South African economy such as mining, manufacturing, agriculture, energy, health, digital and circular economy as well as the three grand societal challenges, which includes climate change, future-proofing education and skills and the future of society.

The South African government through the DSI and the NRF have over the past two decades invested significantly in high-end research infrastructures and state-of-the-art research equipment through various strategic interventions. South Africa is a host of major research infrastructures such as the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), South African MeerKAT radio telescope and the South African environmental Observation Network to name a few. The total investment on SKA and MeerKat was R6.3 billion by end of March 2022 while the total investment through the National Equipment Programme (NEP) is approximately R1.7 billion by the end of March 2024. The investment in research infrastructures has exacerbated the need

for skilled personnel for the optimal development, utilisation, maintenance and managing of these RIs. There is a positive correlation between the availability of RIs and human capacity in that the more RIs become available in the country, the greater the demand for a skilled workforce to operate these RIs in order to generate new knowledge and innovations.

Scientific discovery and innovation are increasingly driven by regional and global RIs, multiuser platforms and big data. The NRF recognises that there is a critical need to develop a cohort of scientists and/or operators whose specialised knowledge and competencies are required by the national knowledge enterprise to ensure optimal research capability and maximum utilisation of RIs. Specialised skills and competencies are required in all disciplines in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) including Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) given the investment that has been made in various scientific domains. RIs in the SSH also play a crucial role in the RIs landscape in the creation and manipulation of large and very heterogeneous bodies of data that opens up new research possibilities and encourage interdisciplinary work. Highly skilled professionals, such as scientists, data and information scientists, uniquely trained operators and engineers are amongst the human capacity required to support research endeavours in different knowledge domains. These professionals not only advance, manage and operate RIs, but are also a source of disciplinary, technical and institutional knowledge and expertise gained over many years.

An important factor in the management of RIs is succession planning and it is essential that the next generation and emerging researchers receive training and skills from the experienced operators, researchers, scientists and engineers. Upskilling researchers will optimise the usage of RIs and contribute towards developing the human capital pipeline in areas that are deemed to have a scarcity of skills. The attraction and retention of highly skilled research infrastructure professionals is of essence in research laboratories and remains among the most challenging positions to fill because of the shortage of skilled personnel. Furthermore, there is an aging workforce of highly skilled experts in research infrastructures in South Africa and training and skills development will address the aging workforce and depletion in the skilled workforce.

Based on the aforementioned needs, the NRF has seen it fit to conceptualise and develop Research Infrastructure Professionals Programme (RIPP) that would provide structured support for the development and growth of the Research Infrastructure Professionals cohort, which comprise of scientists, operators and engineers. This programme will establish career paths for these professionals and ensure their retention in the South African research enterprise. This is required, in the context of national global RIs, the national facilities, science councils, universities and for the broader research system.

2. Aim

The aim of the programme is to develop a cohort of highly skilled professionals such as such as scientists, uniquely trained operators, engineers, and data and information scientists whose knowledge and competencies are required by the national knowledge enterprise to ensure optimal research capability and maximum utilisation of RIs.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Strengthen, renew and replenish the currently aging workforce making use of research infrastructures through skills development;
- Develop a cohort of high-performing emerging/early career researchers in order to succeed experienced operators, scientists, researchers and engineers;
- Ensure optimal research capability and maximum utilisation of research infrastructures and ;
- Transform the demographics of the research workforce that makes use of state-of-the-art research infrastructures in South Africa (SA) by supporting SA Black and SA Female emerging/early career researchers and those that are living with a disability.

4. Areas of Support

The RIPP funding is intended to support candidates to conduct research, in all areas of Science, Engineering, Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities, including Indigenous Knowledge Systems, focusing on research aligned with one of the National Priority Research Areas. Additionally, the research that is conducted by professionals must align with the thematic focus areas as outlined in the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Decadal Plan 2022, which serves as an implementation guide of the 2019 White Paper on STI.

5. Research Impact

The NRF's emphasis on impact of research is in alignment with its mandate and the WP-STI, both of which highlights the importance and contribution of research towards NDP. Research impact is the distinct contribution that outstanding research makes to the society and the economy. RIs contribute to key scientific and technology discoveries and often have a considerable impact on both societal and economic impact. Societal or economic impact

embraces all the diverse ways in which research related skills and knowledge benefit individuals, organisations and nations. The NRF aims to identify, support, promote and communicate the impact of research within the research enterprise (Knowledge Impact) and in society (Societal Impact).

Knowledge impact refers to scientific advances in understanding, interpretation, methods, theory, application and related advances that bring about positive change within and/or across disciplines and fields.
Societal impact refers to the value that research adds to society across various spheres, whether social, economic or environmental. Societal impact reflects the direct or indirect relationship between research, or the research process, and improvement in the quality of people's lives, inclusive of innovation, technological advancements, and policy developments.

The NRF will document and share the impact of this programme through the cohort funded and associated outputs produced. These will include new knowledge produced, publications, conference papers, science engagements, collaborations and trainings on the usage of the infrastructure, patents, products and prototypes. In terms of human capacity development, outputs include a transformed cohort of postgraduate students trained and skilled on optimal utilisation and management of RIs, a transformed cohort of researchers (at different career levels) trained in technical and professional skills needed for the research enterprise in RIs management.

6. The Research Infrastructure Professional Programme

The programme aims to support this cohort at different levels of study starting from masters up to the postdoctoral level. Graduates with only a first degree (undergraduate degree) or honours degree in engineering or data and information science or any other scientific field that involve the support and use of state-of-the-art research infrastructure will be eligible for this programme. Candidates will enter the research infrastructure professionals programme at two different tracks (**Track 1** and **Track 2**) with **Track 1** having multiple stages that the candidate can enter and exit the programme as depicted in **Figure 1.**

Track 1: Candidates with an honours degree can enter **Track 1** at stage 1 of the programme, to undertake studies at masters level for a maximum duration of two years. After the two-year period, the research infrastructure professional may exit the programme or move to stage 2. New candidates with a masters degree or continuing candidates can enter at stage 2 of the

programme in order to undertake their doctoral studies. The maximum duration of the doctoral studies is three years, after which the candidate may exit or continue with the programme into stage 3. At stage 3, new candidates or continuing candidates with a doctoral degree will be allowed to enter stage 3 of the programme where they will be given an opportunity to transition and become either a Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists or a Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Operators. The maximum duration at a postdoctoral level is three years.

Research Infrastructure Scientists are generally individuals that have undergone doctoral level training and who undertake research and generate their own research outputs through the utilisation of specialised research infrastructures. In addition, they are involved in teaching, training of postgraduate students and users, establishing new calibration methods and the development, design, and construction of research infrastructures.

The primary responsibilities of *Research Infrastructure Operators* are to calibrate and operate specialised research infrastructures. Operators have an understanding of the underlying scientific discipline, principles of sample preparation, laboratory testing, data interpretation, as well as the technical, procedural, and problem-solving aspects. They also understand and enforce regulatory requirements and safety regulations. Operators may also participate in training other users, the introduction, investigation and implementation of new procedures and in the evaluation of new instruments.

Track 2: Candidates with an undergraduate or honours degree, will be allowed to enter the programme at **Track 2** and stay for a maximum duration of three years in order to transition to become Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel. After or during the three-year appointment, the Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel that meet the requirements will be allowed to undertake studies at masters level should they wish to do so. The institutions hosting the Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Professionals Scientists and/or Operators as well as R&D Personnel will be expected to have a clear retention strategy for the supported professionals.

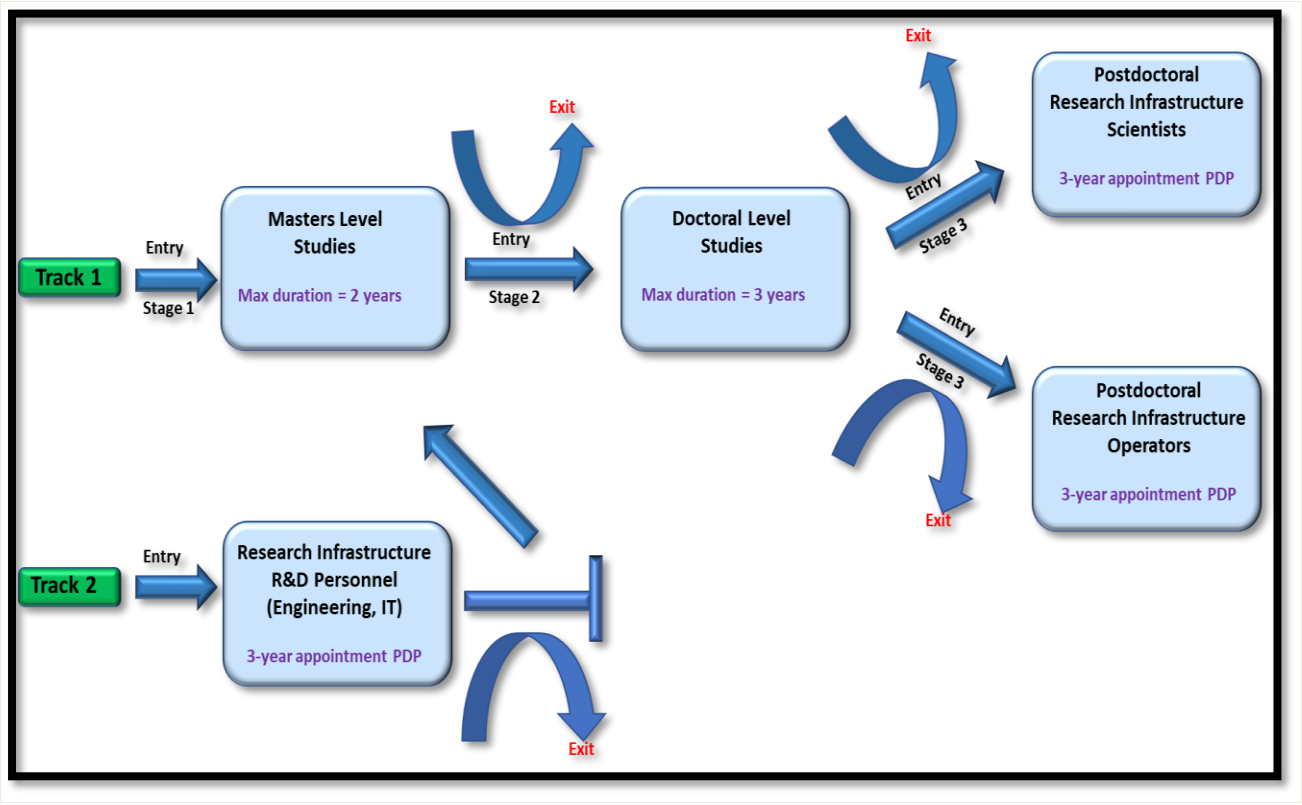

Figure 1. Research Infrastructure Professional Programme (RIPP) tracks.

7. Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria applicable to all the RIPP **Tracks** (Track 1 and 2) and levels of study are listed in section 7.1 while the eligibility criteria specific for the each of the levels are shown is section 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 for Masters and Doctoral Candidates, Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators, and Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel, respectively.

7.1. General eligibility criteria for all Research Infrastructure Professionals

- Only South African citizens and South African Permanent Residents with a valid South African Identity Document (ID) number may apply. Individuals who are in the process of obtaining permanent residence will not be considered.
- Applicants must be based at an NRF Recognised Research Institution in South Africa, such as:
    - South African Public Universities; or
    - South African Public Research entities, viz., Science Councils, National Facilities, Museums or other NRF recognised research institutions as declared by the DSI.

- Institutions submitting applications for support must limit the number of applications to a maximum of ten (10) per institution across the different level of study including the postdoctoral fellows;
- Applicants must intend to undertake research at the above mentioned institutions and most importantly, should make use of state-of-the-art research equipment for their proposed research activities. State-of-the-art research equipment involves major items of equipment that support multi-disciplinary and/or inter-disciplinary research and usually requires significant capital investment. In addition, this equipment requires specialised operators and dedicated personnel to operate and maintain., i.e. research equipment supported under the National Equipment Programme (NEP).
- Full-time employees of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or other research institutions are only eligible to apply if they intend to take unpaid leave for the duration of programme.

7.1.1 Eligibility for Research Infrastructure Professionals for Masters and Doctoral Candidates

- **For first time masters funding** - A minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level, or a minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate diploma, or a minimum average of 65% for all final year subjects of a four-year degree is required; and
- **For first-time doctoral funding** - A minimum of 65% at the master's level. If the master's degree was upgraded to a doctoral study, a minimum average of 65% for all subjects at the honours level, or a minimum average of 65% for all subjects of a postgraduate diploma, or a minimum average of 65% for all final year subjects of a four-year degree should be used.
- The Research Infrastructure Professionals for both Masters and Doctoral studies will be funded at Full Cost of Study (FCS).
- The entry age requirement is 30 and 32 years for masters and doctoral studies respectively, in the year of application, regardless of first year of registration.
- Funding awarded for the 2025 academic year, that is not taken up by 30 April 2025 will be automatically cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.

7.1.2. Eligibility for Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators

- Applicants must have graduated with their doctoral degree within five (5) years of applying to the NRF. Applicants that obtained their doctoral degree prior to February 2019 are therefore not eligible to apply.
- Applicants who are currently completing their doctoral dissertation for submission may apply, however they should be completing their doctoral degree by 31 December 2024. The NRF must receive proof of completion of doctoral degree at the time of commencement of the postdoctoral fellowship grant.
- All awards that are not taken up by 30 June 2025 will be cancelled by the NRF and no consideration or exemptions will be made if the Completion letter or Doctoral certificate has not been issued by this deadline.
- A Letter of Completion from the institution will be considered in lieu of the Doctoral certificate if the applicant is only awaiting the graduation formalities. A copy of the Doctoral certificate should however be forwarded to the NRF when received.
- Full-time employees of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or other research institutions are only eligible to apply if they intend to take unpaid leave for the duration of the postdoctoral fellowship.

7.1.3. Eligibility for Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel

- Applicants must be based at an NRF Recognised Research Institution as indicated under **Section 7.1**, **excluding South African Public Universities.** Therefore only applicants from Science Councils, National Facilities and/or any other Public Research Institutions in South Africa may apply for Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel funding support.
- Applicants must intend on undertaking research, making use of the state-of-the-art research infrastructure at the host institution.
- Only students in their final year of undergraduates or graduates with undergraduate degree or honours degree in engineering or data and information science or any other related scientific field that involves the support and use of state-of-the-art research infrastructure will be eligible.
- Applicants must consult with the Host of Research at the respective institution of choice, before submitting their application to the NRF. A Letter of support and endorsement from the institution will be required as an attachment to the application.

- Funding awarded for the 2025 academic year, that is not taken up by 30 April 2025 will be automatically cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.
- **The Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel funding opportunity will not open in the current 2024 Call for Applications due to budget limitation.**

8. Expectations

Through the RIPP, the research infrastructure professionals will be trained on the optimal utilisation, maintenance and management of state-of-the-art research infrastructures, service provision to different sectors and disciplines as well as technology, method or technique development. It expected that the professionals will spend a portion of their time on (i) service provision (day to day operations of the infrastructure to internal and external clients); (ii) technology development and respective research activities; and (iii) teaching and training of students and users of the infrastructure.

By the end of the funding period, the individual is expected to have developed:

- A reputation as a highly skilled, trained, and experienced research infrastructure professional in their field for the high quality and impact of their research.
- A good track record for research excellence in their field.
- A network of national/international collaborations across disciplines.
- A track record in training users (Applicable to Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators).
- A track record in attracting and successfully supervising students particularly South African Black and female postgraduate students and users of RIs (Applicable to Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and Operators).

9. Application Process

9.1. Call for Applications

The NRF will issue an annual Call for applications for the RIPP funding instrument and applications should be completed and submitted *via* the NRF Connect System at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za. Applicants must ensure they have completed/updated ALL SECTIONS of the *Curriculum Vitae* (CV) on the NRF Connect System, including their Personal Profile and Research Outputs. An Application and Funding Guide, which

provides step-by-step instructions for completing the application template, will be available on the NRF website at https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/.

9.2. Application Requirements

It is important to complete all the compulsory sections as well as the non-compulsory sections relevant to you. Any information submitted as attachments that should have been completed in the RIPP online application form, will render the application as incomplete, resulting in the rejection of the application. Institutions are required to implement internal processes to ensure that, the NRF receives complete applications by the closing date; and that they do not exceed the **maximum of ten (10) applications per institution across the different level of study including the postdoctoral fellows**; and adhere to the stipulated equity targets. All applicants, whether South African citizens or permanent residents, are required to submit a copy of their South African ID document under Personal Profile for audit purposes.

10. Ethical Clearance

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research in accordance with institutional ethical policies and procedures. The ethical clearance approval should be held by the institution and the grantholder and accessible on request, if necessary.

Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website at https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/.

11. Equity and Redress

In line with the national imperative of equity and redress, the programme prioritises support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups, viz. South African citizens (including permanent residents) who are Black (African, Coloured, and Indian), women and people with disabilities.

The equity targets for the RIPP are:

- 100% South African citizens and permanent residents;
- 90% Black (African, Indian and Coloured);
- 55% Female; and
- 1% for people living with disabilities.

This funding opportunity is highly competitive, only a specific number of awards will be granted in the initial phase from the available budget.

12. Evaluation Process

All applications that have been validated by the Designated Authorities (DAs) from institutions of the applicants and submitted to the NRF, will be screened for compliance based on the eligibility criteria and the application requirements and stipulations set out in this Framework. Applications that fail to comply with the requirements and stipulations of the funding instrument will not proceed to the external peer review process.

All applications that pass the screening process and are considered eligible, will subjected to a competitive peer review process. The reviewers are selected by the NRF from existing reviewer databases and other sources and may include potential reviewers suggested by the applicant. In assessing the proposals, reviewers will provide a quantitative scoring and qualitative written evaluation of the proposal based on the RIPP assessment criteria provided in the Score Cards. All proposals submitted to the NRF for funding, irrespective of the Track, will be evaluated and ranked on the basis of the Score Card as provided in Table 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each area will be given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Based on this set criteria, the reviewers will provide recommendations to the NRF on whether or not the reviewed application is recommended or not recommended for funding.

The Evaluation Dimensions for the RIPP programme and/or Score Cards are show in **Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4** for Masters Candidates, Doctoral Candidates, Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators and Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel, respectively.

Table 1. Review Scorecard for Assessment of Applications for Masters Level Funding

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Academic merit (25%)	Average percentage mark for the honours degree if completed; **or** Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final-year undergraduate courses for applicants currently registered for honours degree; **or** Average percentage mark for major subjects in the third-year undergraduate courses for applicants in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
2. Utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment (20%)	Demonstration of the utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment that requires highly specialised operators and dedicated personnel to operate and maintain.
3. Completion time for previous degree (10%)	Time taken to complete the honours degree if completed; **or** Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree if the honours degree is in progress; **or** Time taken to complete third-year undergraduate courses for applicants in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
4. Priority Research Area (10%)	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.
5. Project Outline (35%)	Provide an overview of your research concept and your proposed aim.

Table 2. Review Scorecard for Assessment of Applications for Doctoral Level Funding

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Academic merit (20%)	Percentage mark for the master's degree if completed; **or** If the master's degree is in progress, average percentage mark for the honours degree; **or** Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree.
2. Utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment (20%)	Demonstration of the utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment that requires highly specialised operators and dedicated personnel to operate and maintain.
3. Completion time for previous degree (10%)	Time taken for completion of the master's degree if completed; **or** If the master's degree is in progress, time taken to complete the honours degree or four-year undergraduate degree.
4. Track record or Research Outputs (10%)	Evidence of research outputs in accredited peer-reviewed publications and, presentations at conferences/symposiums.
5. Priority Research Area (10%)	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.
6. Originality of the Doctoral study (20%)	Problem statement, Identified knowledge gaps relating to the problem statement, Aim and Objectives of the study.
7. Potential Impact of the research (Societal and/ or Knowledge) of the research (10%)	Potential to contribute to national research strategies and the strategic goals of the knowledge economy.

Table 3: Scorecard for the Assessment of Applications for Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
Track Record of Applicant (20%)	Relevant expertise/training that will enable the applicant to successfully undertake the proposed research (10%).
	The applicant's research track record which could include peer-reviewed publications, conference proceedings, research prizes and awards (10%).
Utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment (20%)	Demonstration of the utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment that requires highly specialised operators and dedicated personnel to operate and maintain.
Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research (35%)	Literature review with citations; significance of the research in terms of the problem statement, aims and objectives. Scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge to be generated (10%).
	Research design and methodology developed to address the aims and objectives of the research. Provision of a work plan aligned to the objectives including feasible timelines and milestones for the research (10%).
	Alignment with national and institutional research priorities (5%).
Institutional Support (5%)	Institutional support for the postdoctoral fellowship through mentorship, infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.
Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research[1] (20%)	Details of envisaged realistic research outputs such as books, chapters in books, articles in refereed/peer-reviewed journals, refereed/peer-reviewed conference

[1] Access the 'NRF Framework to Advance the Societal and Knowledge Impact of Research' document on the NRF website

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
	outputs, patents, articles in non-refereed / non-peer reviewed journals, Technical/Policy reports, products, artefacts, prototypes and other recognised research outputs (5%).
	Contribution to postdoctoral research skills development in a priority research area (human capacity development of the applicant (10%).
	Potential for impact of the research in South Africa realised through either: • Knowledge impact - scientific advances in understanding, interpretation, methods, theory and applications. • Societal impact - the value research adds to society through improvements in the social, economic or environmental spheres (10%).

Table 4: Scorecard for the Assessment of Applications for Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel

Review Criteria and Weighting	Description
1. Academic merit (20%)	Average percentage mark for major subjects in the final-year undergraduate courses.
2. Utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment (20%)	Demonstration of the utilisation of state-of-the-art research equipment that requires highly specialised operators and dedicated personnel to operate and maintain.
3. Completion time for undergraduate degree (20%)	Time taken to complete the undergraduate degree.
4. Institutional Support (30%)	Institutional support for the Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel through mentorship, infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.
5. Priority Research Area (10%)	Research aligned with one of the national research priority areas.

The reviewers are expected to provide recommendations to the NRF. The final funding decision will be made by the NRF taking into account the recommendations of the expert reviewers, the objectives and equity targets of the funding instrument, as well as the available budget.

13. Funding Scope and Duration

This is a once-off grant spanning a **maximum period of two (2) years** post-receipt of the award letter for the Masters Candidates, and a **maximum period of three (3) years** post-receipt of the award letter for the Doctoral Candidates, the Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators, as well as the Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel. An additional year for support may be considered on a case-by-case basis, should there be a need for the individual to further harness their skill on the usage of the research infrastructure(s).

Table 5 below illustrates the various respective allowances and funding to be funded by the NRF for the research infrastructure professionals at the different levels, i.e., for the Masters

Candidates, Doctoral Candidates, Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators as well as the Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel. These were established in line with other funding opportunities across the NRF.

Table 5: Funding levels for the different RIPP Candidates

Categories	Fellowship/scholarship	Electronic study device allowance[2]	Maximum Assistive Technology Device[3]	Duration of the grant
R&D Personnel	R343 302.00 pa	-	-	3 years
Masters Candidates[1]	R182 836 pa	R10 000	R20 000	2 years
Doctoral Candidates[1]	R188 820 pa	R10 000	R20 000	3 years
Postdoctoral Scientists and/or Operators	R400 000 pa	-	-	3 years

[1.] The scholarship amounts will be reviewed on an annual basis subject to the agreed CPI-linked sector-wide increases and alignment with the *Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Scheme for Students at Public Universities*.
[2.] The electronic study device allowance will be provided as a once-off allowance for the duration of the postgraduate studies.
[3.] The Assistive Technology Device allowance will only be for students living with a disability.

If the grant award has not been taken up within the stipulated time provided under the **Eligibility Criteria (Section 7.1 – 7.4)**, the NRF reserves the right to recall the grant. Host institutions for the research infrastructure professionals will be expected to have a clear retention strategy for the supported professionals, and in addition provide the necessary infrastructure and mentorship of the RIPP professionals.

14. Reporting

All grantholders are required to submit a Progress Report to the NRF annually until funding and approved grant has concluded. The NRF will communicate when the call for submission of the Progress Reports opens on the NRF Connect System at URL: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za. The report should be scrutinised and validated by the relevant DA before submission to the NRF.

15. Conditions of Award for the RIPP Supported Candidates

15.1. Research Infrastructure Professionals for Masters and Doctoral Candidates and the Research Infrastructure R&D Personnel:

- The successful applicants that receive a provisional award for postgraduate funding from the NRF are required to accept the NRF CoG online via NRF Connect, which will be uploaded to the application at the time of the award. The required documents must be uploaded to the system when accepting the award on NRF Connect.
- Successful applicants who are awarded scholarships linked to NRF-funded research are not permitted to change institution, supervisor or project.
- Postgraduate funding awarded for the 2025 academic year, that is not taken up by 30 April 2025 will be automatically cancelled for reallocation unless otherwise approved by the NRF.
- All student funding under the RIPP shall be held as the primary funding towards the research study.
- The grantholder must obtain the degree, for which the postgraduate funding 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 of the completion of the degree.
- Grantholders may not hold bursaries, awards, assistantships and/ or receive emoluments from public or private institutions in conjunction with the RIPP Funding Support. The grant may not be held concurrently with any other DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding or fully funded government scholarship/bursary from organisations, such as Council for Scientific and Industrial Research or the South African Medical Research Council.
- Grantholders on RIPP funding **may receive supplementary or top-up funding** from another private-sector source, another South African government source, the NRF supervisor's running expenses (SARChI, CoEs, etc.) or any other source (E.g. merit award), provided that the total funding received from the NRF, and the other source(s) does not exceed institutional maximum limit.

15.2. For the Postdoctoral Research Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators:

- The grant must be taken up within two (2) months of receipt of the award letter. The award letter and Conditions of Grant (CoG) letter will be available on the awardees' NRF Connect profile;
- Carry-over of unspent funds will not be permitted for RIPP Postdoctoral Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators, except under extenuating circumstances, e.g., ill-health,

and must be motivated for in writing.

- The awards must be taken up in 2025 and awards not taken up by 30 June 2025 will be cancelled by the NRF;
- The award, if successful, will be explicitly awarded for the research area as indicated in the application;
- The awarded individual is not permitted to engage in any other research project not approved by the NRF nor that which has not been subjected to a scientific review process by the NRF;
- The RIPP Postdoctoral Infrastructure Scientists and/or Operators grant shall be held as the primary funding for the research training and this the grant may not be held simultaneously with another postdoctoral grant from any other government or NRF source or NRF administered source;
- RIPP Postdoctoral Fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments from the South African government or from a private sector funder to the institutional capped value;
- RIPP Postdoctoral Fellows are permitted to spend a maximum of 20% of their time undertaking lecturing and student supervision; and
- RIPP Postdoctoral Fellows may not concurrently hold the grant with any full-time salaried employment.

16. Monitoring and Evaluation by the NRF

The NRF will continuously monitor and review the progress of the students at an individual and institutional level. On an ongoing basis, the NRF will undertake institutional visits and focus group discussions which will be conducted at the host universities.

17. Contact Details

Enquiries must be addressed to:

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For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours (08:00 – 16:30) on: E-mail: Supportdesk@risa.nrf.ac.za