



**2024 NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH
SCHOLARSHIPS (PGRS)**

CALL FRAMEWORK

OFFICE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) outlines the need for strategic approaches to drive the country towards a competitive knowledge society and develop the required human capacity in key areas. Central to a highly productive, globally connected economy are high-level skills and extensive participation in research scholarship. The Nelson Mandela University Vision 2030 Strategy¹ highlights the institution's aspiration to invest in the attraction, development and retention of socially diverse, research active postgraduate students to promote talent continuity, research productivity and academic excellence.

The postgraduate cohort is an essential group for improving the research capacity of the University and contributing to the development of the next generation of academics and researchers. An important objective of the Postgraduate Research Scholarships (PGRS) is increasing the critical high-end skills base necessary for national socio-economic development and global competitiveness. In alignment with national imperatives, Nelson Mandela University strives to achieve a fully representative and transformed research workforce and reduce the time to completion of postgraduate degrees, whilst improving success rates, and facilitating high retention of outstanding postgraduate talent in the academic and research fields.

Nelson Mandela University is implementing a new postgraduate funding policy which seeks to advance social justice, equality and inclusion by providing postgraduate funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success and throughput, in an ongoing effort to represent excellence. Citizenship, gender and disability are considered in the allocation of funding, with transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Financial need is included as a criterion for determining the level of funding.

To develop a future cohort of researchers and scholars, it is vital that postgraduate students complete their studies without delay and that they continue through to completion of their doctoral studies. To advance these priorities, financially needy students, students living with a disability, and outstanding academic achievers who gain admission into postgraduate programmes will be funded without interruption from the honours to the doctoral degree level, subject to satisfactory performance at each consecutive postgraduate level. To attract and retain a diverse range of students, funding levels cover the full cost of study for students who meet the required criteria. This approach is aligned with the national postgraduate funding landscape and will enhance synergy between undergraduate and postgraduate funding.

¹ Nelson Mandela University. (2019). Vision 2030 Strategy. Available [here](#) [Accessed 10 June 2021].

This framework document outlines the context and operational procedures for the Postgraduate Research Scholarships (PGRS) and should be read in conjunction with the policy on masters and doctoral degrees (IRC 403.01).

2. AREAS OF SUPPORT

The funding is intended to support honours, masters and doctoral candidates to **pursue full-time postgraduate studies at Nelson Mandela University**, in all areas of Science, Engineering, the Social Sciences and Humanities, including the institutional research themes, which are: Ocean and Coastal Sciences; Social Justice and Democracy; Environmental Stewardship and Sustainable Livelihoods; Innovation and the Digital Economy; Origins, Culture, Heritage, and Memory; as well as Humanising Pedagogies.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1. Eligibility Criteria for First-Time Applicants for Honours, Masters and Doctoral Funding

PGRS funding is open to **South African citizens, permanent residents and international candidates** who intend to undertake full-time honours, masters and doctoral studies at Nelson Mandela University in the 2024 academic year. To be eligible, applicants must:

- Meet the following minimum academic requirements:
 - **For first-time honours funding** - A minimum of 65% for the relevant undergraduate degree.
 - **For first-time masters funding** - A minimum of 65% for the Honours degree OR a minimum of 65% for the Postgraduate Diploma OR a minimum of 65% for the four-year degree.
 - **For first-time doctoral funding** - A minimum of 65% at the masters level.
- Be students who will be enrolled for the honours degree in Education, Health Sciences and other disciplines that by design are only offered part-time.

The eligibility criteria for Full Cost of Study (FCS) and Partial Cost of Study (PCS) are presented in Table 1 for all first-time applicants for honours, masters and doctoral funding.

Table 1: Eligibility criteria for FCS and PCS funding for the 2024 academic year

Degree Level	FCS		PCS
	Outstanding Achievers	Financially Needy and Applicants with a Disability	Other
Honours	A minimum of 75% for the relevant undergraduate degree	A minimum of 65% for the relevant undergraduate degree	A minimum of 65% for the relevant undergraduate degree
Masters	A minimum of 75% for the Honours degree OR Postgraduate Diploma OR four-year degree	A minimum of 65% for the Honours degree OR Postgraduate Diploma OR four-year degree	A minimum of 65% for the Honours degree OR Postgraduate Diploma OR four-year degree
Doctoral	A minimum of 75% (or cum laude) for the Masters degree	A minimum of 65% for the Masters degree	A minimum of 65% for the Masters degree

Only South African citizens and permanent residents who are either financially needy, living with a disability or exceptional academic achievers are eligible for FCS. Applicants that are eligible for FCS can be awarded at PCS due to budget constraints. Nelson Mandela University reserves the right not to make an award or adjust a grant under any circumstances from PCS to FCS. Refer to section 6 for further information on considerations for funding. The PCS funding will be awarded to South African citizens, permanent residents and 10% of international students.

3.2. Additional Eligibility Criteria for First-Time Applicants for Honours, Masters and Doctoral Funding

In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 3.1:

- Applicants who commenced their masters and doctoral studies **on a part-time basis and wish to be considered for funding for completion of their studies on a full-time basis**, may apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, only students who will be registered on a full-time basis for their second or third year of masters studies in 2024 may apply. Students who will be registered on a full-time basis for their second, third, or fourth year of doctoral studies in 2024 may apply, and the initial date of registration for the degree will be taken into consideration to determine the support period if the student’s application is successful.
- The eligibility period for applicants who took **abeyance** due to exceptional circumstances such as ill-health or bereavement leave will be calculated from the date of initial

registration which will exclude the period of abeyance. These applicants must attach an official letter of approval for the period of abeyance.

3.3. Eligibility Criteria for Uninterrupted Study Support

Financially needy students, students living with a disability, and outstanding academic achievers who gain admission into postgraduate programmes will be funded without interruption. Uninterrupted study support is funding of postgraduate students from the honours up to the doctoral level, however, students will have to submit a new scholarship application for each degree level. In addition to the eligibility criteria stated in section 3.1, PGRS-funded students will be eligible for uninterrupted study support if they meet the following requirements:

- The PGRS-funded degree was completed within the funding periods which are one year for a full-time honours degree and two years for a full-time masters degree.
- Students register for a masters degree immediately after completing the honours degree.
- Students register for a doctoral degree immediately after completing the masters degree.
- Students meet all the university requirements for postgraduate funding.
- Students submit a new scholarship application for each level of study.
- Students submit the required bi-annual progress reports for the relevant levels of support.

3.4. Eligibility Criteria for Extension Support for Masters and Doctoral Studies

The eligibility criteria for applicants for Extension Support for full- and part-time **masters and doctoral studies** in 2024 are as follows:

- Applicants must have received PGRS funding in 2023. Extension will only be granted under **exceptional circumstances such as ill-health or bereavement** leave and will be for either six or twelve months as Nelson Mandela University expects all postgraduate students to complete their qualifications within the funding period indicated in section 6.2 below.
- Applicants must attach a letter of motivation detailing reasons why the degree was not completed during the funding period. The letter must include a **detailed work plan with timelines of six or twelve months** for the outstanding activities and must be **signed by both the student and supervisor**.
- Applicants seeking extension support at the masters level must have registered for their masters degree in 2022 for full-time studies and in 2021 for part-time studies.
- Applicants seeking extension support at the doctoral level must have registered for their doctoral degree in 2021 for full-time studies and in 2019 for part-time studies.

- Applicants seeking extension support will be eligible for postgraduate funding at the same value as their 2023 funding.
- Applicants must have support from their supervisor for the Extension application to be considered.

3.5. Students not Eligible for PGRS Funding

The following categories of individuals are **not** eligible to apply for PGRS funding:

- Students who hold full- and part-time PGRS funding, which will still be active in 2024 are not eligible to apply for funding as new students. These continuing students must submit all required Progress Reports **on the PGRS Online Submission System** by the stipulated cut-off date to receive funding for the 2024 academic year.
- Students who registered for full- and part-time masters studies before 2022 and 2021 respectively.
- Students who registered for full- and part-time doctoral studies before 2021 and 2019 respectively.
- Individuals who already hold a degree for the same level at which they intend studying, are not eligible to apply, e.g., individuals who already hold honours or masters qualification may not apply for PGRS funding for honours or masters studies.
- Students who de-registered from a degree and are applying for funding for the same level may apply. However, the first date of registration for the original degree will be considered when determining the eligible period for PGRS funding.
- Students who intend to study towards a Postgraduate Diploma, Advance Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate, BTech or Postgraduate Certificate in Education. These students should contact the Financial Aid Office at FinancialAid@mandela.ac.za.
- Employees and their dependents who receive formal study benefits (e.g. waiving of class fees or staff discount) must apply for the staff related financial incentive.
- Individuals who have not applied for admission into a postgraduate programme at Nelson Mandela University for the 2024 academic year. These individuals must first identify the postgraduate programme they want to be enrolled in for their postgraduate degree and apply for admission before applying for PGRS funding. The procedure to apply for admission is available [here](#).
- Students pursuing an undergraduate degree irrespective of the degree for which they are enrolled. This includes students in the final year of a four-year degree.
- Individuals in full-time salaried employment are not eligible to apply.

4. APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Students must first identify the honours, masters or doctoral programme they want to be enrolled in for their postgraduate degree and apply for admission *before* applying for PGRS funding. Applications for funding in 2024 must be submitted on the PGRS Online Submission System by accessing the link <https://apps.mandela.ac.za/pgrs>. **The closing date for applications is Tuesday, 31 October 2023.** First time and extension support applicants must attach the documents listed below.

- Clear Certified ID/passport
- An official academic record on the University letterhead.
- Applicants with outstanding fees are required to attach their stamped University account statement reflecting outstanding fees.
- First-time applicants who were previously supported by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) must attach a letter from NSFAS or proof in the form of an official stamped University financial statement clearly showing that the funds originated from NSFAS.
- Extension support applicants must attach a letter of motivation detailing reasons why the degree was not completed during the funding period. The letter must include a **detailed work plan with timelines of six (6) or twelve (12) months** for the outstanding activities and must be **signed by both the student and supervisor**.
- Applicants with disabilities must attach an official and legible medical certificate in support of the disability.
- Applicants who took **abeyance** during their masters or doctoral studies must attach an official letter of approval for the period of abeyance.

Applicants must select the 'I accept the T's and C's' tick box before submitting the application, otherwise the application cannot be submitted.

***Applications that do not have the required attachments, are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect information or fail to comply with instructions will be rejected.**

Applications that meet the eligibility criteria will be subject to review by an internal panel constituted by the Office of Research Development. The panel will consider among other things, academic performance, financial need and alignment of the proposed research to Nelson Mandela University's institutional research themes. Based on the outcomes of the review process, applications will either be recommended for funding or not. Final awards will be based on the recommendations from the review process and the availability of funds. The Office of Research Development cannot guarantee funding for all eligible applicants, therefore students are encouraged to apply to multiply funders.

IMPORTANT: The Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPI Act) has been promulgated and was implemented on 01 July 2020. All personal identifiable information provided by applicants shall be treated in accordance with this statute and be used only for academic and academic administration purposes, as indicated by the Nelson Mandela University [Privacy Policy Statement](#). By applying for the scholarship, applicants provide consent to use all their personal identifiable information provided to the University for the aforesaid purposes.

5. FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS AND APPEALS

Once the assessment processes have been completed and the Office of Research Development has approved the recommended funding decision, the status of applications on the PGRS Online Submission System will indicate whether the application is successful or unsuccessful.

Appeals relating to the review process may be submitted to the respective scholarship administrators whose contact information appear in section 9 below. Only those applicants who met the eligibility criteria but were not recommended for funding are eligible to appeal. An appeal must be justified and must be endorsed by the supervisor to be considered. Appeals may not be lodged against the funding decision taken such as PCS funding or not being awarded funding due to budget constraints. It is worth noting that a successful appeal does not automatically constitute an award, rather the application will be moved to the list of applications recommended for funding but may not be awarded due to budget constraints.

6. FUNDING PRINCIPLES

This scholarship programme aims to attract, nurture and retain outstanding academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level. In line with Nelson Mandela University's aspiration to enhance equity of postgraduate student access, success and throughput using funding, PGRS funding will prioritise support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups *viz.* Black, female and persons living with disabilities. In addition, applicants who are financially needy, yet academically capable and previously funded by the NSFAS and PGRS will be prioritised for funding. PGRS funding will be allocated in line with the following transformation targets:

- 90% South African citizens and permanent residents
- 10% students from SADC countries and beyond
- 55% women

The South African Citizens and permanent residents' targets are further disaggregated in terms of race and disability as follows

- 75% Black (African, Coloured, and Indian)
- 24% White
- 1% students living with a disability

When scholarship awards are made, consideration will be given to ensuring the need to strengthen research capacity in national priority research areas and the institutional research themes, as well as to accelerate demographic transformation. Allocation of funding will be determined by recommendation by the internal review panel; historic trends in scholarship uptake; postgraduate enrolment; financial need based on previous NSFAS funding and availability of budget.

6.1.Scholarship Values

Successful applicants will be funded at FCS or PCS as presented in Table 2 below. Scholarship values for the 2024 academic year for full-time honours, masters and doctoral studies are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Scholarship categories and values

Category	Funding per Degree Level					
	Honours		Masters		Doctoral	
	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS	FCS	PCS
Scholarship Value (ZAR)	139 000	100 000	157 000	100 000	165 000	90 000
Electronic Study Device Allowance (ZAR)	10 000	0	10 000	0	10 000	0
Maximum Assistive Technology Device (ZAR)	20 000	0	20 000	0	20 000	0

Scholarship values may be reviewed annually in line with inflation. The electronic study device allowance will be provided as a once-off allowance for the duration of the postgraduate studies. All Grantholders with disabilities may apply for additional funding for an assistive technology device or human support of up to **R20 000**. This is the maximum amount permitted during the tenure of the scholarship.

6.2. Maximum Funding Period

PGRS funding is aimed at supporting students admitted into postgraduate programmes for full-time honours, masters or doctoral studies. Extension support for masters and doctoral students will be approved only under exceptional circumstances such as ill-health or bereavement leave. The maximum period of support for each postgraduate level of study is indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Maximum funding period for each postgraduate degree

Degree Level	Maximum Funding Period
Honours	One year
Masters	Two years
Doctoral	Three years
Masters Upgrade to Doctoral	Four years
Extension Support for Masters and Doctoral Degrees	Six or twelve months

The period of support for PGRS funding is calculated from the first year of registration for the degree, regardless of the years of PGRS funding.

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Successful applicants who receive a **provisional** letter of award for PGRS funding are required to **read and accept** the Conditions of Grant (CoG), which will be forwarded at the time of the award and register as the registration block will be lifted.
- The Student-Supervisor Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) clarifying expectations and preferences in managing the research project, must be signed by both the student and supervisor and submitted with the first semester progress report. Masters students registered for coursework in the first year of study, should submit the agreed and signed MoU with their second semester report due at the end of the first year of funding.
- PGRS funding awarded for the 2024 academic year, that is **not taken up by 15 March 2024 will be cancelled for reallocation** unless otherwise approved by the Office of Research Development.

All successful candidates will be expected to obtain the degree within one year after the PGRS funding has ended and notify the Office of Research Development in writing. Grantholders who fail to complete the degree will have to pay back the amount equal to all the PGRS funding they have received.

- PGRS Grantholders may also hold funding from private-sector source, South African government source, NRF supervisor’s running expenses (SARChI, CoEs, etc.) or any other source (e.g., merit award). The combined value of scholarships held by each student may not exceed R180 000, R240 000 and R300 000 for honours, masters and doctoral students respectively. In such cases the PGRS award value will be adjusted accordingly.
- The PGRS funding awarded for honours, masters and doctoral degrees may not be used to settle historic debt.

8. REPORTING

For continuous funding and monitoring of the PGRS programme, masters and doctoral Grantholders will be required to submit a progress report at the end of each semester **on the PGRS Online Submission System**. Funds for continuing students will only be released after submission of the progress report.

9. CONTACT DETAILS

For technical enquiries related to the PGRS Online Submission System, please contact the ICT Helpdesk (Mondays to Fridays from 08h00 to 16h30) on:

Tel: +27 (0) 41 504 3000 or E-mail: helpdesk@mandela.ac.za

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

Roles	Contact Person	Email
Honours	Ms Tozama Mnonopi	tozama.mnonopi@mandela.ac.za
Honours	Mr Jolindon Petersen	jolindon.petersen@mandela.ac.za
Masters and Extension Support	Ms Tariro Phiri	tariro.phiri@mandela.ac.za
Doctoral and Extension Support	Mrs Delene Gerber	delene.gerber@mandela.ac.za