



**NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY
POSTDOCTORAL AND
RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS**

CALL FRAMEWORK

OFFICE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 2024

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	OBJECTIVES	3
3.	ELIGIBILITY	4
4.	APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS	6
5.	FUNDING PRINCIPLES	7
6.	CONDITIONS OF AWARD	8
7.	REPORTING	8
8.	CONTACT DETAILS	8

1. INTRODUCTION

Support for high-level skills development is important for accelerating South Africa's transition to an innovation-led, knowledge-based economy. The first few years following the completion of a doctoral qualification are critical to the establishment of a successful research career. It is during this early career phase that the skills and knowledge developed through postgraduate training are entrenched. Dedicated support for emerging researchers is a prerequisite for promoting and accelerating their career progression to becoming leading international scholars. Nelson Mandela University aspires to increase the number of postdoctoral and research fellows as part of its strategic focus on building and strengthening the profiles of researchers who are emerging.

The Nelson Mandela University postdoctoral and research fellowships are intended to fund doctoral graduates and researchers, with the long-term view of renewing and replenishing the leading international researcher cohort to sustain the enterprise. For this framework, postdoctoral fellows are doctoral graduates who will enhance their post-PhD research training during the fellowship. Research fellows are emerging researchers who have completed a postdoctoral fellowship or have formal relevant research experience aligned to Nelson Mandela University's [institutional research themes](#). The applications for postdoctoral or research fellowships must be submitted by the host researcher who must be a permanent member of staff, Emeritus Professor or Research Associate of the University, with a proven research track record in the specific area of the prospective postdoctoral or research fellow.

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the eligibility criteria, funding principles, application process and governance of four fellowships, namely, (i) the Nelson Mandela University Council Postdoctoral Fellowships, (ii) the Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowships and (iii) the Research Fellowships. The Nelson Mandela University Council Postdoctoral Fellowship supports doctoral graduates to receive postdoctoral training in all fields of research, however the allocation model will prioritise capacity development in areas aligned to the institutional research themes, entities, and other University strategic research areas. *The Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowships will be reserved for a limited number of exceptional applicants.* This framework document should be read in conjunction with the postdoctoral and research fellowships policy (IRC 402.09).

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the postdoctoral and research fellowships are to:

- Increase the number and quality of postdoctoral and research fellows at Nelson Mandela University;
- Enable young scientists to attain post-PhD research training and strengthen their

research profile;

- Support young scientists and professionals in strategic, basic, and applied research with the intention to promote innovation;
- Transform the demographic profile of researchers at Nelson Mandela University by prioritising support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups *viz.* Black persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

3. ELIGIBILITY

3.1. Eligibility Criteria for Host Researchers

To be eligible to host a postdoctoral or research fellow, the host researcher must:

- Be a permanent member of staff, Emeritus Professor or Research Associate of the University with a proven research track record in the specific area of the prospective fellow.
- Identify and submit a complete application for an appropriately qualified fellow.
- Support the productivity of the fellow by providing *inter alia* research running costs, access to the library, a computer or access to computing facilities, and the costs associated with conference participation.
- Submit a letter of support indicating that the necessary research infrastructure, resources, and funds for undertaking the research and supporting the fellow exists within their faculty/school/department.
- Commit to initiating or guiding efforts towards accessing and securing alternative sources of funding to ensure sustainability of the fellowship beyond the first funding cycle of the fellowship.

3.2. General Eligibility Criteria for Postdoctoral Fellowships

To be eligible for consideration, the nominated postdoctoral fellow must:

- Have obtained a doctoral degree within the past five (5) years. Doctoral candidates who have submitted their thesis for examination may be considered. Recruitment of fellows who completed their doctoral degree less than five (5) years ago from institutions other than Nelson Mandela University is strongly encouraged.
- Preferably be less than 45 years old at the time the application is submitted.
- Demonstrate the potential and drive to contribute to an identified research theme at Nelson Mandela University which also aligns with the host's research area.
- Not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the award. However, successful fellows may undertake limited teaching responsibilities and/or

co-supervision of postgraduate students (not exceeding 12 hours per month) and may be remunerated for these duties.

3.3.Additional Eligibility Criteria for the Nelson Mandela University Council Postdoctoral Fellowships and the Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowships

The following additional eligibility criteria apply to the Nelson Mandela University Council Postdoctoral Fellowships and the Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowships:

- Applicants who are applying for a second cycle of postdoctoral funding from Nelson Mandela University will be eligible if they intend undertaking research on a new project.
- Applicants who are applying for a second cycle of postdoctoral funding from Nelson Mandela University to continue working on the same project are **not** eligible.

3.4.Eligibility Criteria for Research Fellowships

To be eligible for consideration, the prospective research fellow must have:

- Obtained a doctoral degree within the past 10 years.
- A minimum of two years post-PhD research experience related to Nelson Mandela University's institutional research themes.
- Evidence of research outputs emanating from the doctoral and post-PhD research activities. These include articles published in accredited peer-reviewed journals, mentoring of senior postgraduate students, and co-supervision of postgraduate students.
- The potential to generate external funding for research projects.
- Not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the award. However, successful fellows may mentor and co-supervise senior postgraduate students. Although the research fellow may undertake limited teaching responsibilities, such assignments should preferably be curtailed to not more than 10% of the weekly workload and clearly agreed upon in the Memorandum of Understanding.

3.5.Exclusions

The following categories of researchers are not eligible to be considered as postdoctoral or research fellows:

- Fellows funded by Nelson Mandela University whose grants will still be active in 2025. These continuing fellows must submit a progress report at the end of the 2024 academic year to receive continued funding in 2025.
- Doctoral candidates in their final year who have **not** submitted their thesis for

examination.

- Researchers who received or hold a valid NRF A, B or C rating.
- Postdoctoral fellows who are seeking a second cycle of funding from Nelson Mandela University **to continue with research on the same project.**
- All fellows who are seeking a third cycle of funding from Nelson Mandela University.

4. APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Applications for the Mandela University Council Postdoctoral Fellowships and the Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowships, as well as the Mandela Research Fellowships must be **submitted by the Host researcher.** Senior researchers who wish to host postdoctoral or research fellows are invited to complete and submit (via email) the attached application form and accompanying documents to Ms Welma van Heerden (Welma.VanHeerden@mandela.ac.za) by **Thursday 03 October 2024.** Unfortunately, late applications cannot be considered, and incomplete applications will be rejected.

The following attachments should be submitted with the application:

- Host researcher's CV
- CV of prospective fellow
- Host letter of support indicating that the necessary research infrastructure, resources, and funds for undertaking the research and supporting the fellow exists within their faculty/school/department (Including but not limited to research running costs, access to the library, a computer or access to computing facilities, and the costs associated with conference participation)
- Two letters of reference for the prospective fellow
- Certified copy of fellow's Identity document/passport
- Certified copy of the fellow's doctoral qualification. For those awaiting graduation, an institutional letter stating that the requirements for the doctoral qualification have been fulfilled. Doctoral candidates awaiting the outcome of their thesis examination must attach a letter from their current institution confirming that their doctoral thesis is under examination.

Proposals that meet the eligibility criteria and application requirements will be subject to review by an internal panel constituted by the Office of Research Development. The panel will consider *inter alia* whether a project has clear aims and objectives, sound methodologies, a detailed work plan and alignment to Nelson Mandela University's strategic research areas.

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.

IMPORTANT: The Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPI Act) has been promulgated and was implemented on 1 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. By applying for the fellowship, host researchers and prospective fellows provide consent for use of all their personal identifiable information provided to the university for the aforesaid purposes.

5. FUNDING PRINCIPLES

This funding programme aims to develop and grow the research competence, productivity, and stature of postdoctoral and research fellows in pursuit of excellence. Every attempt will be made to allocate funding to meet the target of 70% South African citizens, 70% Black and at least 50% researchers who are women, in line with the institutional transformation plan.

5.1. Duration and Value of the Fellowships

The funding duration for postdoctoral and research fellows is two and three years respectively. Female fellows who take maternity leave during the tenure of the fellowship, are eligible for an additional four (4) months of support beyond the fellowship period.

The fellowship values for the 2025 academic year are presented in the table below.

Fellowship Type	Value per annum (Rand)
Nelson Mandela University Council Postdoctoral Fellowship	204 000
Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship	300 000
Research Fellowship	350 000

The postdoctoral fellowships are non-taxable stipends that may be supplemented by the faculty/school/department. The salary for the research fellowship is subject to income tax and may be increased annually in alignment with inflation.

5.2. Assistive Devices for Fellows with Disabilities

All fellows with a disability may apply for once-off funding for an assistive technology device or

human support to a maximum amount of R20 000.

6. CONDITIONS OF AWARD

- The fellowship **must be taken up in 2025** by submitting the signed Conditions of Grant. Awards that are not taken up within 5 (five) months will be cancelled.
- The fellowship must be the primary source of funding and cannot be held concurrently with any other fellowship.
- Fellows **may not concurrently hold full-time salaried employment**. However, successful *postdoctoral fellows* may undertake limited teaching responsibilities and/or co-supervision of postgraduate students (not exceeding 12 hours per month) and may be remunerated for these duties. Successful *research fellows* may mentor and co-supervise senior postgraduate students. Although the research fellow may undertake limited teaching responsibilities, such assignments should preferably be curtailed to not more than 10% of the weekly workload and clearly agreed upon in the Memorandum of Agreement or Understanding.
- Fellows must be registered at Nelson Mandela University and be based on campus during the tenure of the fellowship.
- *International post-doctoral fellows* must apply for a Section 11(1)(b) Visitors Visa for the duration of the fellowship. The condition of this visa states that fellows may not conduct any work or business in RSA and therefore will only receive a non-taxable stipend.
- *International Research Fellows* must apply for a *work-permit* since the research fellowship is an employment offer for three years.

7. REPORTING

Successful fellows agree to submit annual progress reports at the end of each academic year for continuous monitoring of progress. The progress report must be in the format provided by the Office of Research Development and must indicate their progress against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Memorandum of Understanding.

8. CONTACT DETAILS

All queries may be directed to Ms Welma van Heerden (Welma.VanHeerden@mandela.ac.za).