

National Health Research Enterprise Doctoral Programme

PhD Scholarships for Health Science Research

The National Health Research Enterprise (NHRE) Programme is an initiative of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) to fill a gap left by the substantial reduction in international funding available to the South African health research ecosystem. The NHRE is supported by funding from the SAMRC, National Treasury, through the National Department of Health, Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust. It is founded on a shared commitment to retaining the research infrastructure and high-calibre cadre of clinicians and scientists who have led pioneering research and innovation that has been impactful, not just for South Africa, but for the whole world. Maintaining this world class infrastructure and capacity relies on continuing to develop the next generation of health researchers through multidisciplinary, innovative doctoral training. The NHRE Doctoral Programme is a new initiative that aims to strengthen health research capacity in South Africa by supporting outstanding doctoral candidates undertaking innovative research that addresses priority health challenges.

Research areas of relevance include:

- HIV, TB and other infectious diseases
- Maternal, child and adolescent health
- Pandemic preparedness
- Non-communicable diseases
- Health systems and policy research
- Climate and health

Applications that also include cross-cutting technologies such as digital health, artificial intelligence and genomics are encouraged.

Successful candidates will be expected to conduct rigorous, relevant doctoral research under the supervision of experienced researchers; actively engage in structured mentorship; and participate in scientific engagement activities, thereby preparing them to become the next generation of leaders in health research. Interdisciplinary collaboration and industry-focused research are also encouraged.

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to build a pipeline of highly skilled PhD graduates in the health sciences who will drive health research and innovation in South Africa and contribute to global health impact.

Table 1: Details of the PhD Scholarships

Level	Funding Period (Years)	Value of scholarship p.a.	Notes
PhD	3	R250 000.00	1. Candidates will only be funded for the prescribed PhD duration (i.e., the first 3 years of study or part thereof). Support for a 4 th year of PhD may be considered only on compelling motivation for those who are past their 1 st year of study; however, the maximum total funding

			period available under this RFA is 3 years. Funding for each year is not automatic and will be contingent upon demonstrated progress. 2. Candidates must i) provide proof of full-time registration, ii) have PhD research approval, and iii) have ethics clearance, where applicable.
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Requirements for application (Please check your eligibility before you apply).

- 1) Must be a South African citizen or permanent resident.
- 2) Must hold a master's degree.
- 3) Must have a PhD research project that has been endorsed by the prospective supervisor and institution.
- 4) The proposed PhD research project must be within the health sciences, preferably with the potential to deliver meaningful health impact.
- 5) Must be registered as a full-time PhD student at a South African university at the commencement of the award.
- 6) Must provide a written commitment of participation from an appropriately experienced research supervisor who is willing to train the student for the entire duration of the degree.
- 7) The research supervisor must have research funding for the project and appropriate facilities for the scholar to effectively conduct the PhD research project.

Table 2: PhD Scholarship Application Requirements

Requirements (Please use this list to make sure your application is complete)	Attached check (v)
1. Cover Letter: Max. 1 page: Motivation demonstrating the candidate's suitability and describing how success in the NHRE Doctoral application will impact the candidate's career.	
2. Curriculum vitae: An abridged curriculum vitae containing a full list of research outputs and other meritorious achievements. Include all awards received e.g. scholarships/bursaries, research awards, etc.	
3. Abstract: Max. 2 pages: Abstract of the PhD proposal outlining the rationale, design, feasibility, plans for research translation and information dissemination as well as potential impact of the proposed research project. NB: The proposed research project must be aligned with the priority research areas for this specific call.	
4. PhD project approval letter: An official approval letter confirming that the candidate's research project has been formally approved by the academic institution.	

5. Research support Letter: Max. 1-page: A letter from the host institution confirming its commitment to supporting the proposed PhD research project. The letter must confirm the availability of the required research infrastructure and facilities, outline the proposed supervisory team (including any co-supervisors and their roles, where applicable), and confirm that appropriate supervision will be provided. It must also specify the availability of project research funding and clearly describe all institutional contributions (financial and/or in-kind, such as laboratory space, specialised equipment, technical support, or access to research platforms). The letter must be signed by the Supervisory Team.	
6. Official letter confirming the date of first registration for the degree (For applicants applying for funding for 3rd or 4th year of PhD registration).	
7. Current proof of PhD registration or admission letter if 2027 is your first year of registration.	
8. Proof of ethics clearance, or an official letter confirming that the proposal is currently under ethics review, where applicable.	
9. Certified copy of the applicant's South African identity document (must be certified by a Commissioner of Oaths and <i>not be older than 6 months</i>)	

Application Timelines

Opening date: 28 July 2026
 Closing date: 22 September 2026, 23:59
 Supervisor submission to SAMRC closing date: 29 September 2026, 23:59

Application Process

Application steps 1 to 3 below must be completed before the specified deadlines.

- Step 1 – Applicant to complete the [online application](#) form **by 22 September 2026**.
- Step 2 – Applicant to upload all the required supporting documents **by 22 September 2026**.
- Step 3 – The research supervisor must complete the research supervisor's abridged track record and commitment form and submit the application on or before **29 September 2026**.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

The South African Medical Research Council reserves the right to disqualify ineligible, incomplete and/or inappropriate applications, change the conditions of the award, extend the closing date, or make no awards at all. Please note that only successful candidates will be contacted after completion of the review, selection, and approval processes. Should you not hear from the SAMRC by 31 December 2026, please assume that your application has been unsuccessful.

For enquiries, contact Dr Lindokuhle Ndlandla at Lindokuhle.Ndlandla@mrc.ac.za / Tel. 021 938 0442.

Scholarship Conditions

- Scholarship holders are expected to spend at least 80% of their time conducting research.
- Teaching and clinical activities may not take up more than 20% of the time of the scholar.
- Candidates may not hold a bursary from more than one South African Government statutory entity at any given time.
- Scholarship holders may not receive, concurrently with this scholarship, other bursaries, grants or remuneration which bind them to enter the service of any organization without prior agreement of the SAMRC.
- Scholarship holders may not receive, concurrently with this scholarship, other non-binding remuneration/scholarships/fellowships and grants without prior agreement of the SAMRC.
- Scholarship recipients will be required to declare the value of any other scholarship(s) or award(s), whether in cash or in-kind or direct payments into their personal bank accounts that they may hold for the same study programme.
- Scholarship holders may not, without seeking approval from the SAMRC, register at a university other than that through which the application has been submitted.
- Once the scholarship has been awarded, the scholarship holder may not change his/her supervisor without informing the SAMRC.
- Application for renewal of funding will be considered on an annual basis, and success thereof will be subject to satisfactory progress being made.
- Continuation of funding is subject to the submission of a satisfactory progress report from both student and supervisor.
- The scholarship is for the specified enrolment year and therefore cannot be deferred to subsequent years.
- Successful applicants will be required to sign acceptance of the SAMRC Scholarship terms and conditions.

Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA)

As of the 1st of July 2020, the new Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) came into full effect. The law is designed to protect how all juristic persons use, store and process data. You can read the full details on the act here: <https://popia.co.za/>

The SAMRC as a responsible statutory science council complies with POPIA. The SAMRC will receive personal information through applications submitted to the SAMRC for the purposes of applying for funding. The personal information requested on the application template is necessary for the SAMRC to fully evaluate the applications for funding. This information will be shared with members of Scholarship Selection Committees of the SAMRC and external funders and/or stakeholders where applicable as well as the SAMRC management for the purposes of processing the applications. The SAMRC will process this personal information strictly in accordance with POPIA. The SAMRC undertakes specifically to process the personal information on the basis that (a) it was provided voluntarily and (b) the information will be processed only as far may be necessary and within the limitation and ambit of the purpose of evaluating the application for funding (i.e., the purpose with which the personal information was received). The SAMRC confirms that it is lawfully processing the information since the purpose of processing is to seek quality applications for funding which the SAMRC is mandated to do in terms of Section 4 of the SAMRC Act 58 of 1991, thus the SAMRC is fulfilling its legislated and lawful mandate, and strategic objectives as provided for in the SAMRC Act.

I hereby authorise and consent to the SAMRC using and sharing my personal information for the purpose of evaluating and processing my application for funding.

Y	N
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Application Form [\(online\)](#)

Personal details:

1. Title (Ms, Mr, Dr)	2. First name:				
3. Surname:					
4. Gender:	Female		Male		
5. Population group:	African	Coloured	Indian	Asian	White
6. Citizenship	South African citizen		South African permanent resident		Other (Specify)
7. ID number:	Attach a certified copy of South African identity document (not older than 6 months)				
8. ORCID iD Register - ORCID					
9. Postal address:	10. Physical address:				
11. Work telephone number: <i>(where applicable)</i>	12. Mobile number:				
13. University e-mail address:	14. Personal e-mail address:				

Academic Information:

15. Highest qualification	e.g. MSc in Biotechnology	
16. Type of PhD registration	Full-time	Part-time
17. Year of PhD study in 2027	First Year	Second Year
	Third Year	Fourth Year
18. University at which you have been accepted/registered/intend to register		
19. Date of first registration for the degree to be funded	Attach evidence	
20. Current proof of PhD registration or admission letter if 2027 is your first year of registration.	Attach evidence	
21. Faculty		

22. Department			
23. Title of PhD research project			
24. The proposed research project has been approved by the postgraduate office or equivalent office:	Yes Attach official evidence of approval	No	
25. The proposed research project requires ethics approval:	Yes, ethics already approved Attach official evidence of approval	Under ethics review Attach official evidence of submission	No
26. Alignment of the proposed research with the priority research areas of this call	HIV, TB and other infectious diseases	Maternal, child and adolescent health	
	Pandemic Preparedness	Non-communicable diseases	
	Health systems and policy research	Climate and health	
27. Attach PhD progress status and PhD completion plan document (signed by the main supervisor): The document should clearly detail the work completed to date, outstanding tasks, and the key milestones both achieved and anticipated. These milestones should include the literature review, data collection, data analysis, research publications, conference presentations, and final thesis submission, and must be accompanied by clear, realistic, and time-bound timelines.	Applicable to 4th year PhD students in 2027		
28. Potential health, societal and scientific impact of the proposed research study (i.e., relevance of your research, including alignment with national health priorities and its potential contribution to addressing societal challenges and advancing science)			
29. Science engagement activities: <i>State how you intend to communicate and engage with the wider community on the significance of your research in an effort to</i>			

<i>bridge the gap between science and society</i>		
30. Please comment on the progress to date if the applicant is already enrolled in the PhD programme / You may attach a supporting document if the space provided is insufficient.		
31. List your PhD supervisory team (5)	Full name	Area of Expertise
32. Full name of the main PhD supervisor		
33. E-mail address of the main PhD supervisor		
34. Contact number of the main PhD supervisor		
35. PhD co-supervisor (where applicable)		
36. Email address of PhD co-supervisor		
37. Name and surname of the Department's student financial administrator. The person(s) responsible for issuing invoices and preparing financial reports.		
38. Email of the Department's student financial administrator.		
39. Contact number of the Department's student financial administrator.		

I, _____ (full names), hereby submit my application for a full-time PhD Scholarship and acknowledge and understand the conditions under which this scholarship is awarded.

Signature:	Date:
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Research supervisor's abridged track record and commitment form

(SAMRC supervisor/proposed supervisor will receive a link to complete the form online)

1. View what the applicant has completed?	Yes	No
2. Title (Professor/Dr/Ms/Mr)		
3. Research supervisor's full name		
4. Institution name		
5. E-mail address		
6. Department		
7. Contact number		
8. h-index		
9. Number of citations		
10. Number of Articles in refereed/ peer-reviewed journals in the last five years		
11. Number of Books (authored or edited)		
12. Number of Chapters in books		
13. Number of Refereed/peer-reviewed conference outputs		
14. Number of Patents		
15. Number of Articles in non-refereed/ non-peer-reviewed journals		
16. Number of Technical Reports		
17. Number of Other contributions/ reports (e.g. Policy reports/briefs, Research briefs)		
18. Number of Masters candidates graduated in the last five years		
19. Number of Doctoral candidates graduated in the last five years		
20. Number of Masters candidates currently supervised		
21. Number of Doctoral candidates currently supervised		
22. Supervisor CV	Attach CV	
23. Are you the main research supervisor of the applicant?	Yes	No
24. If no, please enter the main supervisor's name and surname		
25. Applicant name and surname		
26. Has the candidate's research proposal been approved by the institution / or relevant authorised office?	Yes	No

27. Has the candidate's research proposal obtained ethics approval from the relevant Research Ethics Committee?	Yes	No State reason(s)
28. Has the ethics committee approved the research proposal?	Yes	No If not applicable, state reason
29. Alignment of the proposed research with the priority research areas for this call	HIV, TB and other infectious diseases	Maternal, child and adolescent health
	Non-communicable diseases	Pandemic preparedness
	Health systems and policy research	Climate and health
30. Are there any concerns (if any please provide details)		
31. Comment on the feasibility of the proposed research study		
32. Will this research project (degree) be completed within the prescribed degree duration? (PhD = 3 years)	Yes	No State reason(s)
33. Please comment on progress to date if the applicant is already enrolled in the PhD programme/ You may attach a supporting document if the space provided is insufficient.		
34. Please comment on the applicant's ability to conduct the proposed research project		

I _____ (supervisor's full names), hereby support the scholar's application for the SAMRC scholarship and commit to undertake the supervision of the applicant _____

(applicant's full name).

Submit

NB: This form must be submitted before or by 29 September 2026.