

SAMRC Researcher Development Programme

PhD research funding for clinical or health researchers

This funding instrument is designed to support individuals employed in academic institutions and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) intramural and extramural research units as well as SAMRC research centres who are on the path to becoming independent researchers in the areas of health or clinical research. The quantity of doctoral degrees awarded serves as a key metric in evaluating the objectives outlined in South Africa's National Development Plan, reflecting the correlation between a nation's PhD attainment and its overall level of development. Research suggests that countries with higher numbers of PhD graduates tend to exhibit stronger innovation capacities and economic progress, further reinforcing this link. Importantly, a doctoral qualification is a requirement for researchers wishing to supervise or train doctoral students. In support of this objective, this once-off award to emerging researchers, who are at the late stages of their PhDs (last 12-months), serves to relieve pressure on the candidates to speed up the conclusion of their PhDs. The funds can be used for dedicated time to spend on their research activities, pay for work relief, or any justifiable intervention. The programme prioritises candidates who are likely to succeed, are well published, or have at least one accepted publication emanating from their PhD studies. The value of the award is up to a maximum of R250,000.

This Request for Applications particularly encourages applications from SAMRC staff and affiliated postgraduate students for whom completion of their PhD degrees has been directly impacted by the US funding cuts. Such applications may be considered for funding beyond 12 months.

Requirements for all applications

- 1) South African citizen or permanent resident.
- 2) Full-time employee of an academic institution in South Africa or SAMRC or an SAMRC affiliated postgraduate student.
- 3) Officially approved research proposal and ethics clearance (where applicable) for the PhD project.
- 4) Must have at least one accepted publication emanating from their PhD studies.
- 5) Must complete their thesis write-up within twelve (12) months from the date of commencement of the award. For applications from students affected by US funding cuts a longer period of support may be considered.
- 6) Research abstract to be provided (see example).
- 7) Full research proposal to be provided.
- 8) Research project must fall within the SAMRC priority research areas. See list below:
 - Biomedical Research
 - HIV, TB and other communicable diseases
 - Health System Strengthening
 - Health Promotion and Disease Prevention



- Maternal child and woman health
- Non-communicable diseases
- Public Health Innovation
- Violence, injury and trauma

How to apply

Opening date:	28 May 2025
Revision of the RFA document date	25 June 2025
Closing date:	18 August 2025, 23:59

Application Process

Application steps 1 to 3 below must be completed before or by 18 August 2025, 23:59.

- Step 1 – Applicant to complete the online application.
- Step 2 – Applicant to upload all the required supporting documents.
- Step 3 – Research supervisor must complete the research supervisor's commitment form and submit the application.

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 2025, please assume that your application has been unsuccessful.

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

Research Award and Scholarship Conditions

- All remuneration/fellowships and grants received concurrently with this award for the purpose of obtaining a PhD, must be declared to the Division of Research Capacity Development (RCD) of the SAMRC.
- Awardees may not register at a university other than that through which the application was submitted, without seeking approval from RCD.
- Once the award has been made, the awardee may not change the research supervisor or subject of research without informing RCD.
- Awardees are required to submit bi-annual progress reports endorsed by the research supervisor upon request.
- The award is a once-off funding for one year and is non-renewable. Exceptions may be considered for applications from students affected by US funding cuts.
- Awardees must complete their thesis write-up within twelve (12) months from the date of commencement of the award.
- Awardees are required to attend all training and support workshops organised by RCD.



- Successful applicants will be required to enter into an agreement with the SAMRC to complete their studies within the specified period.
- If awarded, applicants must be able to take up the award immediately.
- The scholarship is for the specified enrolment year and therefore cannot be deferred to subsequent years.
- Awardees are expected to conduct their research in accordance with the approved research proposal and budget.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understood the scholarship conditions.

Y	N
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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 will comply 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 purpose 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 research proposals 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 organisation sharing my personal information for the purpose of evaluating my application for funding.

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



Checklist of required supporting documents	check (v)
To start the application, the applicant must satisfy the conditions of this check list.	
1) Certified copy of South African identity document <i>Must be certified within the last 6 months from submission of application</i>	
2) Proof of registration for 2025	
3) Research abstract - see abstract example	
4) Full research proposal	
5) Evidence of PhD project/proposal approval by Research Office or Postgraduate Office	
6) Evidence of ethics clearance (if applicable)	
7) Support letter from the employer (preferably Head of Department or SAMRC Research Unit Director) indicating the support that will be provided to the candidate, such as granting of protected time; and/or where applicable the appointment of a suitable replacement in order to facilitate the uninterrupted work at the institution.	
8) Support letter from the research supervisor who is willing to train and mentor the candidate for the entire duration of the degree. The support letter should clearly describe how the candidate will be supported for the duration of the award, the available funding and other resources that the candidate requires to successfully conduct research. Where candidates' progress has been interrupted due to the US funding cuts, the applicant's supervisor needs to provide a letter describing how the US funding cuts have impacted the applicant's progress.	
9) Supervisor's abridged curriculum vitae showing supervisor's research track record in the last 5 years focusing on research grant funding, research outputs including h-index, and number of current PhDs supervised and PhDs graduated.	
10) Applicant's motivational letter: approximately 500–1000 words demonstrating their suitability for the award and describing how success in the SAMRC Researcher Development Award Programme application will impact on the candidate's scientific career development.	
11) Applicant's curriculum vitae detailing all training and research experience to date, research outputs (publications, conference presentations etc.) and any meritorious achievement in the academic, clinical or research domains.	
12) PhD completion plan including a detailed timeline for completion of the tasks that remain for finalization of the thesis in the form of a Gantt chart. The PhD completion plan must have clear and feasible timelines and must be signed by both the student and supervisor.	
13) Budget request indicating how the award will be utilised - see budget template	



14) Evidence of research outputs emanating from your PhD studies.	
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APPLICATION FORM (*Application must be completed online*)

Personal Details (Mark the correct one with a tick ✓)

1. Title (Ms, Mr, Dr)						2. First Name:		
3. Surname:						4. Gender: F / M		
5. Population group:	African	Coloured	Indian	Asian	White	6. Date of Birth: <i>Day/ Month / Year</i>		
7. Citizenship						South African citizen	South African Permanent resident	Other (Specify)
8. South African ID number: (insert)						Attach a certified copy of the ID document and confirm here with a tick (✓) that you have attached it.		
9. Postal address:								
10. Work telephone number: (<i>where applicable</i>)						11. Mobile number:		
12. Alternative number:								
13. University e-mail address:								
14. Alternative e-mail address:								
15. Occupation:								
16. Name of the employing institution:								
17. If employed by the SAMRC, please provide the Research Unit name								
18. Details of the head of department in the employing institution:						Title	Full name	
						Email address	Contact number	
19. Current type of contract and part time arrangements: <i>Please detail the type of contract you currently hold (e.g. full-time fixed contract, permanent position etc.).</i>						Not applicable		
20. Do you have protected time in your current role/contract dedicated to your PhD studies?						Yes	No	N/A
						If yes, please state the number of hours per week dedicated to your PhD studies		
21. Please confirm the number of hours (per week) you propose to spend on your PhD if awarded funding:								



22. Anticipated completion date:			
23. Will you be taking sabbatical leave to complete your PhD?	Yes	No	
24. Expected start and end dates of sabbatical leave:			
25. Will all your teaching/clinical/research duties be covered during the sabbatical period?	Yes	No	N/A

Academic Information (Mark the correct one with a tick ☒)

26. Highest qualification:							
27. This application is for which degree:	e.g., PhD in Psychology						
28. PhD year of study in 2026:	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year	6th year	7th year
29. University at which you are currently registered:							
30. First date of registration:	Attach evidence of first date of registration						
31. Faculty:							
32. Department:							

Research Project Information

33. Title of research project to be funded:			
34. Is your PhD research project funded by the NRF	Yes	No	
35. If your PhD research is funded by the NRF, please provide the following information	Funding instrument or program e.g., NRF Thuthuka-PhD track	Period of support e.g., (2025-2027)	Award amount per annum
36. Was your PhD research project funded by a US funding agency	Yes	No	
37. If your PhD research project was funded by a US agency, please provide the following information	Funding agency	PI and grant number	Period of support (e.g., 2025-2027)



38. Type of Research:	Basic Science Research	Clinical Research
	Epidemiological Research	Other (specify type of research)
34. Alignment of the proposed research to the SAMRC priority research areas. Tick the appropriate areas.	Biomedical Research	HIV, TB, and other communicable diseases
	Health System Strengthening	Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
	Maternal child and woman health	Non-communicable diseases
	Public Health Innovation	Violence, injury, and trauma
35. Potential societal impact of the proposed research:		
36. Do you have any research outputs emanating from your PhD studies:	Yes (please upload)	No
37. Research supervisor's full name:		
38. Research supervisor's institution:		
39. Research supervisor's email address:		
40. Research supervisor's contact number:		
41. Co-supervisor's full name (if applicable):		
42. Co-supervisor's email address:		
43. Co-supervisor's Institution:		
	National	International
44. Proposed research project requires ethics approval:	Yes Attach official evidence of approval	No
45. Proposed research project has been approved by the postgraduate office or equivalent office:	Yes Attach official evidence of approval	No



Summary of progress to date

Outline the progress achieved to date, highlighting what still has to be completed.

Research Plan (12 months) January to December 2026

Planned activities: List the planned key activities for the year ahead such as chapters to be completed, publications, experiments, field work, analytical work and conference attendance/presentations

Key activities	Estimated timeframe (Start-End Date)	Deliverable(s)
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		

Expected research outputs

	Working title	Targeted journal title	Year	IF (<i>impact factor</i>)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

IF= Impact Factor

Planned scientific skills/career development training or workshops



	Name of skills training event	N/I*	Date	Place	Provider	Description
1.						
2.						
3.						

N/I*= National or International

Planned conference presentations (*limited to one conference attendance*)

Name of conference/meeting	Abstract accepted		N/I*	Date	Place	Title of presentation (indicate whether poster or oral presentation)
1.	Yes	No				

N/I*= National or International

I, _____ (full names), hereby submit my application for a full-time scholarship and am cognisant of the conditions under which this scholarship is awarded.

NB: An application which does not comply with the above requirements will be regarded as incomplete and will not be processed.

Submit



Main research supervisor's commitment form

SAMRC supervisor/proposed supervisor will receive a link to complete the form online. This form must be submitted before the closing date.

Title (Prof/Dr/Ms/Mr)			
Research supervisor's full name			
Institution name			
Department			
E-mail address			
Contact number			
Are you the main research supervisor of the applicant?	Yes	No	
Has the candidate's research proposal been approved by the institution / or <u>relevant authorised office</u> ?	Yes	No	
Does the proposed project require ethical clearance?	Yes	No	
Has the ethics committee approved the research proposal?	Yes	No	N/A <i>State reason</i>
Does the subject area for the research complement or directly relate to your research interests?	Yes	No	
Does the institution have the internal facilities, infrastructure (laboratories or as appropriate) and research funding that will be required for the research to be conducted?	Yes	No	
Are there any concerns? (if any please provide details)			
Comment on the feasibility of the proposed research			
Do you endorse the submitted PhD completion plan?	Yes	No	
	<i>If your answer is no please provide reasons</i>		
Will this research project (degree) be completed before or by 31 December 2026	Yes	No	
	<i>State reasons</i>		
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

