

Doctoral and Master's Scholarships in the field of Biostatistics/Statistics (and other related quantitative fields)

Request for Applications (2026 enrolment)

Biostatistics is an emerging and rapidly growing field in sub-Saharan Africa, driven by the increasing availability of biomedical data for population health and research. This surge in data underscores the need for strong quantitative and analytical skills to perform robust, innovative, and efficient analyses of complex datasets. Consequently, there is an urgent need to train local researchers, including biostatisticians, to conduct high-quality research and support evidence-based decision-making. The programme is designed to support individuals engaged in advanced research degree programs at the intersection of statistics, mathematics, biomedicine, computer science, data science, bioinformatics, epidemiology, and health informatics.

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) is pleased to announce a call for Doctoral and Master's scholarship applications in Biostatistics and related fields at a South African university for the 2026 academic year.

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to strengthen capacity in data-driven biomedical and health research, support the development of highly skilled scientists equipped to address complex health challenges and promote interdisciplinary collaboration across quantitative and clinical sciences by providing funding support to scholars undertaking Doctoral and Master's studies in Biostatistics or research programmes at the intersection of statistics, mathematics, biomedicine, computer science, data science, bioinformatics, epidemiology and health informatics. Preference will be given to candidates who are already registered, have an approved research project proposal and confirmed supervisors.

Funding value and duration

Level	Funding Period (Years)	Value of scholarship p.a.	Notes
Doctoral	3 + (1 year extra, on compelling motivation from the Supervisor)	R250 000.00	Candidates will only be funded for the prescribed PhD duration (i.e., the first 3 years of registration) notwithstanding the fact that previous years were not funded by the SAMRC. Fourth year of funding can be considered in special circumstances.
Masters	1 + (1 year extra, on compelling motivation from the Supervisor)	R200 000.00	Candidates will only be funded for the prescribed Masters duration (i.e., the first 2 years of registration) notwithstanding the fact that previous years were not funded by the SAMRC.

Masters and Doctoral programs supported under this call include:

- Applied Statistics and Applied Mathematics
- Statistics & Mathematical Modelling
- Computer Science & Machine Learning
- Data Science & Computational Biology
- Bioinformatics & Systems Biology
- Epidemiology & Public Health Analytics
- Health Informatics & Digital Health Systems

The Scholarship will cover the following:

- The purpose of the funding is to fund a stipend and tuition fees.

Eligibility Requirements

- Must be South African citizens or permanent residents.
- Must be registered full-time for Masters or Doctoral degree in priority fields listed above or have proof of admission to a South African university before applying for the scholarship. **Preference will be given to applicants who have already registered for the degree.**
- Must have a strong background in Statistics or Mathematics or other related quantitative fields, and demonstrate a strong analytical and research aptitude.
- Must provide a research concept note, and the research topic must be aligned with SAMRC's priority research areas which are: 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, and Violence, injury and trauma.
- Prospective PhD candidates should have obtained a masters qualification at the time of application with the intention to pursue doctoral studies. Similarly, prospective masters candidates should have obtained an honours/four year qualification at the time of application with the intention to pursue master's studies.
- Applicants must be registered for the intended masters or doctoral degree at the time of commencement of the award.
- Applications must include a prospective supervisor's endorsement form supporting the proposed doctoral or masters research study to be undertaken by submitting i) the supervisor's form, and ii) full research proposal via the REDCap application system. The applicant must complete the supervisor's details on the supervisor information section of the application. An e-mail will then be generated requesting the supervisor to complete the form electronically. The supervisor's commitment form is an integral part of the application and without this information, the application will not be considered for funding.

How to apply

Opening date: 7 November 2025
Closing date: 15 December 2025, 23:59

Application Process

Application steps 1 to 3 below must be completed before or by 15 December 2025 23:59.

- Step 1 – Applicant to complete the [online application](#).

- Step 2 – Applicant to upload all the required supporting documents.
- Step 3 – The main research supervisor or proposed 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 March 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

- The Scholarship holder shall not hold full-time employment during the tenure of the scholarship but shall be entitled to undertake teaching, clinical or other related duties/activities for a maximum of eight (8) hours per week and shall be entitled to be remunerated for that work provided that the level of remuneration is in line with the normal University rates.
- 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 with the SAMRC through its Division of Research Capacity Development.
- 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 non-binding remuneration/fellowships and grants without engaging with the SAMRC.
- Scholarship holders may not, without seeking approval from the SAMRC, register at a university other than that through which the application has been submitted.
- Scholarship holders will be expected to submit 6-monthly progress reports or as requested, signed by a course coordinator and/or research supervisor.
- An application for renewal of funding for a second year will be considered subject to satisfactory performance.
- Successful applicants will be required to enter into an agreement with the SAMRC to complete their studies within the specified time.
- If awarded, applicants must be able to take up the award immediately.
- The scholarship is for the specified enrolment year (2026) and therefore cannot be deferred to subsequent years.

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 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 as 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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APPLICATION [FORM](#) (Application form must be completed online)

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

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

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: Day/ Month / Year		
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:	

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

15. Highest qualification:				
16. This application is for which degree level:	PhD		Masters	
17. If Masters, does your Masters programme include coursework	Yes <i>(if yes please attach A copy of master's programme structure)</i>		No	
18. PhD/Masters year of registration in 2026	1 st year <i>Attach admission letter</i>	2 nd year	3 rd Year	4 th Year <i>(If this application is for fourth year of PhD registration, please attach a detailed PhD completion plan with clear timelines of what remains to be completed. The PhD completion plan should be signed by both applicant and supervisor.)</i>
19. Current degree funded by:				
20. University at which you are currently registered or intend to register for your PhD/Masters:				
21. First date of registration:	Attach evidence of first date of registration. If 2026 is your first year of registration, please attach admission letter.			
22. Faculty:				
23. Department:				

24. Proposed research project requires ethics approval:	Yes Attach official evidence of approval	Under ethics review Attach official evidence	No
25. Proposed research project has been approved by the postgraduate office or equivalent office:	Yes Attach official evidence of approval	No	
26. Title of research project to be funded:			
27. Research field:	Applied Statistics and Applied Mathematics		
	Statistics & Mathematical Modelling		
	Computer Science & Machine Learning		
	Data Science & Computational Biology		
	Bioinformatics & Systems Biology		
	Epidemiology & Public Health Analytics		
	Health Informatics & Digital Health Systems		
1. Alignment of the proposed research project to the SAMRC priority research 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	
2. Potential societal impact of the proposed research study			
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 bridge the gap between science and society</i>			
3. Research supervisor's full name:			
4. Name of the institution where the research supervisor is based:			
5. Research supervisor's email address:			
6. Research supervisor's contact number:			
7. Do you have an SAMRC co-supervisor	Yes	No	
8. SAMRC supervisor's full name:	If yes, please complete		
9. SAMRC supervisor's email address:			
10. Name of the Research Unit where the SAMRC supervisor is based			

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

Checklist

Requirements and selection criteria (Please use this list to ensure that your application is complete)	Attached check (v)	
1. Suitability of the candidate: Max. 2 pages: Motivation demonstrating the candidate's suitability and describing how success in the scholarship application will impact the candidate's career. Must be written by the applicant.	Y	N
2. Suitability of the candidate: Abridged curriculum vitae containing a full list of research outputs in the last seven years and other meritorious achievements.		
3. Research Concept Note: Max. one page: Abstract of the Doctoral/Masters research proposal outlining the aim and objectives, rationale, design, feasibility, plans for research translation and information dissemination as well as potential impact of the proposed research project. NB: Proposed research project should be aligned with the SAMRC priority research areas list on the application form.	Y	N
4. Main supervisor's track record: Max. 2 pages: An abridged outline of publications, grants and experience of the main supervisor in research supervision of Master's and PhD students in the last five (5) years	Y	N
5. Certified full academic transcript	Y	N
6. Recommendation letter from current supervisor/course instructor/head of department		
7. Certified copy of the applicant's South African identity document (must be certified by a Commissioner of Oaths within the last 6 months from submission of application.)	Y	N
8. Proof of registration for the current year. If 2026 will be your first year of registration, please provide official admission letter from the institution where the applicant will register.	Y	N
9. A copy of the master's programme structure if it includes coursework i.e. a list of core modules that make up the master's programme and other requirements for successful completion of the degree (obtainable from MSc course coordinator).	Y	N

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

Submit

SAMRC research supervisor's commitment form

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

Title (Prof/Dr/Ms/Mr)			
Research supervisor's full name			
Institution name			
E-mail address			
Contact telephone number			
h-index			
Total number of citations			
Was the h-index and total citations sourced from	Google Scholar	Scopus	Web of Science
Number of Articles in refereed/ peer-reviewed journals in the last five years			
Number of Books (authored or edited)			
Number of Chapters in books			
Number of Refereed/peer-reviewed conference outputs			
Number of <i>Patents</i>			
Number of Articles in non-refereed/ non-peer-reviewed journals			
Number of Technical Reports			
Number of <i>Other contributions/ reports (e.g. Policy reports/briefs, Research briefs)</i>			
Number of Masters candidates graduated in the last five years			
Number of Doctoral candidates graduated in the last five years			
Number of Masters candidates currently supervised			
Number of Doctoral candidates currently supervised			
Are you the main research supervisor of the applicant?	Yes	No	
If no, please enter the main supervisor's name and surname			
Applicant name and surname			
Has the research concept note been developed for the candidate?	Yes	No	
Has the candidate's research proposal been approved by the institution / or <u>relevant authorised</u> office?	Yes	No	
Does the proposed project require ethical clearance?	Yes	No	

Has the ethics committee approved the research proposal?	Yes	No	<i>If not applicable, state reason</i>
Alignment of the proposed research with the SAMRC's priority research areas	Biomedical Research	Maternal child and woman health	
	HIV, TB and other communicable diseases	Non-communicable diseases	
	Health System Strengthening	Public Health Innovation	
	Health Promotion and Disease Prevention	Violence, injury and trauma	
Does your Unit Director support this application	Yes	No	
Are there any concerns (if any please provide details)			
Comment on the feasibility of the proposed research study			
Will this research project (degree) be completed within the prescribed degree duration? (PhD = 3 years, Masters= 2years)	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

NB: This form must be submitted before the closing date.