

UNIVERSITY OF THE
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**UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
POLICY**

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**POLICY on
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS /
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS
("PDRF"/ "PDRFs")**

1. Preamble

The University is faced with the challenge of achieving objectives inherent to a research focus within the context of the strategic priorities of the UFS.

Emanating from the above is the requirement to develop a sustainable pool of researchers from postdoctoral research fellowships en postdoctoral research fellows.

2. Scope

The proposals contained in this policy document are aimed at introducing sufficient measures to ensure an environment that is transparent, focussed, competitive and rigorous in securing postdoctoral research fellowships and postdoctoral research fellows.

The scope of the policy specifically excludes any practice for the protection of the ownership rights of the UFS with regard to intellectual property created by employees and students of the UFS, in order to enable the UFS to patent and/or exploit and commercialise such intellectual property to the advantage of the UFS, the creator, the local community and the country as a whole.

3. The objectives of PDRFs

The primary objectives of PDRFs include the following:

- To place the University of the Free State at the forefront of research and innovation.
- To generate new knowledge and transfer knowledge and skills.
- To enable outstanding doctoral graduates to obtain experience of research and innovation at a higher education institution.
- To provide an opportunity for promising young researchers from different universities to enhance their research skills and expertise.
- To expand on existing research and ideas and to pursue new lines of research.

- To interact with other academics and postdoctoral fellows.
- To emphasise an increase in publication outputs.
- To establish and enhance South African intellect;
- To develop knowledge for stakeholders such as the government, business, industry and social communities.
- To promote national and international conference attendance by postdoctoral fellows and the presentation of research papers at these conferences.

4. Identifying a PDRF opportunity

The opportunity and funding for a PDRF may arise in a variety of ways, but is generally either:

- awarded to a host academic staff member (“host academic”) via a university research subcommittee or by an outside funding agency as part of a larger research grant; **or**
- awarded to a recent doctoral graduate by the relevant academic department, or as a result of an application for funding to an external funding body (for example the National Research Foundation “NRF), the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Claude Leon fellowship, the Andrew Mellon fellowship, the Friedland Trust, the Percy Fox Scholarship, etc.).

The onus is on the host academic to ascertain that there is sufficient funding from a bona fide bursary source for a PDRF.

Should funds from contract research be considered for a PDRF, the contract must make express provision for a bursary (in the form of a PDRF) to be awarded, and **may not** be payment in return for services rendered or specific outcomes in order to comply with South African Revenue Service (“SARS”) legislation for the award to be regarded as a bona fide bursary or scholarship. For record-keeping purposes, a copy of the contract must also be submitted to the PDRF Co-ordinator at the **Division for Research Development** (hereafter referred to as the PDRF Co-ordinator²).

² The PDRF Co-ordinator referred to in this policy will be the person responsible for administering the policies and internal controls of the Institution relating to PDRFs.

5. Advertising a PDRF opportunity

The relevant host academic/host department must advertise such an opportunity in order to comply with the SARS regulations governing 'open bursaries' and the existing university policy for the payment of bursaries awarded by departments.

The advertisement must be placed in at least one public forum other than the University's intranet or internal electronic bulletin board in order to attract applications from postdoctoral candidates from other universities. Examples of such public forums include the UFS's website, NRF's website, newspapers and flyers and pamphlets at departmental open days.

Copies of advertisements must be retained for record-keeping purposes. A copy of the advertisement must also be lodged with the PDRF Co-ordinator, to ensure that the **Division for Research Development** is aware of all current PDRFs being offered at the University.

6. Special conditions applicable to PDRFs

- PDRFs are not employees of the University and they can therefore not qualify for any employee benefits, including retirement funding, membership of retirement funds, support in respect of a medical aid scheme or any for other employee benefits. This does not preclude PDRFs from performing temporary tasks for remuneration, for example conducting ad hoc tutorials or marking examination scripts in a similar manner as other postgraduate students. This remuneration would be taxable on the same basis as that paid to other part-time employees for services rendered.
- The purpose of PDRFs is not to relieve the workload of a higher education institution's teaching staff. A PDRF's purpose is rather to conduct research and to publish research results in accredited journals.
- PDRFs will not form part of the staff complement for the purposes of determining the University's employment equity statistics.

- International PDRFs must apply for the appropriate visas/work permits for the purposes of doing research or taking academic sabbaticals in South Africa.
- PDRFs will be registered as research students and will be issued with access cards which differ from those of employees and which can be used gain access to the necessary facilities of the higher education institution. These cards may, in some instances, be student cards and student library cards.

7. Requirements for qualifying for a PDRF and the process of awarding PDRFs

The host academic, in consultation with the Head of Department (HOD), is responsible for:

- accepting and acknowledging applications for PDRFs;
- interviewing and selecting an appropriate candidate (interviewing and selecting an appropriate candidate should be done by a constituted panel consisting of various stakeholders including academic and research members within the host department and members of the management and/or administration of the University); and
- ensuring, during the interviewing and selection process, that the proposed candidate holds, or will soon hold, an appropriate doctoral degree, has an extensive research track record and/or publication record and has experience of delivering papers at conferences.

At the time of the award, the doctor's degree should have been conferred on the candidate no longer than five years ago.

After the interviewing and selection process has been completed, the host academic must supply the PDRF Co-ordinator with the following details of the chosen applicant:

- The name and full contact details of the selected candidate.
- The amount of the award and its source/s (description of the original source/s and the university cost entity/centre) from which it will be paid.
- The term of the award (one or two years initially).

- Proof of doctoral qualification (copy of doctor's degree (PhD) or proof of satisfactory fulfilment of the University's requirements for a PhD) and a copy of the candidate's Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- A copy of the applicant's identity document (ID) or passport photo page.

A formal letter of award, stipulating the terms of the PDRF and amount of the award must then be drawn up by the PDRF Co-ordinator and sent to the selected candidate (by e-mail and normal mail) and to the host academic (by e-mail only).

In the case of an international PDRF candidate, the Letter of Award must be sent to the selected candidate via the personnel of the International Office (IO) of the University, who will then include extra documentation to be sent to the selected candidate and notify the elected candidate of the assistance which is offered by the IO.

A copy of the Letter of Award must be placed on the selected candidate's PDRF file by the PDRF Co-ordinator.

8. Acceptance of the award – registration & memorandum of understanding

By way of acceptance, the PDRF must submit an application form for registration as a PDRF for the current academic year and, in co-operation with the host, must also complete a memorandum of understanding, which outlines the general conditions of the award and the research to be undertaken. Upon completion, both documents must be sent to the PDRF Co-ordinator and copies of these completed documents should be retained on file by the academic host.

Completion of the above-mentioned documentation must be followed by a registration process at the University whereby the PDRF will register as a PDRF.

9. Payment procedure

8.1 Requests for payment

Payments to PDRFs will be made only if completed Request for Payment forms are received by the PDRF Co-ordinator. The host academic is responsible for ensuring that the information supplied is complete and correct and that there are sufficient funds in the designated cost entity/centre to cover the requested payment/s.

8.2 Frequency of payments

Payments are made by means of the tuition fees procedures/division, into the PDRFs' South African bank accounts, on the dates indicated on the Request for Payment form.

8.3 Restrictions on the period of payment

Payments to PDRFs are restricted to three-monthly advances (in the case of university sources i.e. a university research subcommittee) and six-monthly advances (where external funding is paid to the University bi-annually). No single annual payments may be made to PDRFs, as this may create problems should the PDRF terminate prematurely.

8.4 Extra amounts

Amounts that exceed the amount stipulated in the Letter of Award should not be in contravention of the conditions for any specific bursary award (as stipulated, for example, for a NRF bursary award, or any bursary award conditions as stipulated in the University's policies) or the conditions as set out in paragraph 8.5 below.

8.4.1 Any ad hoc ("top-up") amounts that are not specified in the Letter of Award or similar updated document (see paragraph 8.4.2 below) are taxable and must be paid via the salary system, and not via the PDRF Co-ordinator and the bursary system.

8.4.2 Requests to increase the initial PDRF bursary award amount (which is reflected in the Letter of Award) must be permitted by the specific bursary award conditions and must be accompanied by a formal letter from the host academic of the department hosting the PDRF specifying the amendment of the bursary amount.

The PDRFs are personally responsible for ensuring that they do not violate their bursary or visa conditions with regard to additional funding, and the **Division of Research** of the University is obliged to report any such contraventions (in terms of signed undertakings) to the relevant funding organisations.

8.5 Remuneration for additional work

8.5.1 The express purpose of PDRFs is to enable the PDRF to engage in a period of uninterrupted research. As bursary recipients, PDRFs may therefore not do any additional work related to their research in return for payment, e.g. contract research. However, certain bursary schemes make provision for PDRFs to do additional unrelated work.

8.5.2 Where extra work is permitted in terms of the bursary scheme (e.g. the NRF), up to 12 hours weekly of additional paid work may be undertaken. This work must be paid for at the university rate for casual work by workers with a PhD (please consult the Human Resources Department for current rate) and must not be paid by means of the PDRF bursary system, but via the salary system. These payments are taxable in accordance with the prevailing tax legislation.

8.5.3 PDRFs may not be forced to deliver lectures to students. Should they wish to lecture briefly to gain experience, this should be done on a voluntary basis and for a maximum of 12 hours per week (e.g. as part of the additional work for which they may be remunerated in terms of paragraph 8.5.2 above), but this should in no way constitute part of the basic teaching provision of a department.

8.6 Progress reports

Requests to the PDRF Co-ordinator by PDRFs for payment of the second instalment of the PDRF award and each subsequent payment for a three/six-month period must be accompanied by a brief progress report by the host academic. This report serves a dual purpose, namely to provide a record of research done and also provide the host academic/the University with a clear picture of the current state of affairs regarding research conducted as part of PDRFs. These reports are also required annually as a basis for the continuation of external funding to the University. PDRFs are encouraged to publish their research findings expeditiously.

10. Extension of PDRFs awards for a third, fourth and fifth year

Should funding be available and should the host academic deem this to be desirable for the University, a PDRF may be extended for:

- a third year at the request of the host academic. In this instance the host academic must send a letter requesting the extension to the PDRF Co-ordinator who, in turn, will draft a new letter of award to formally extend the term and will follow the formal process of award and acceptance of a PDRF as set out above in paragraphs 5 and 6; and
- a fourth and fifth year at the request of the host academic, subject to the written approval of the Vice-Rector: Academic and Research. In this instance the host should write a letter of motivation to the Vice-Rector: Academic and Research to be submitted to the Vice-Rector: Academic and Research via the office of the PDRF Co-ordinator before the end of the third year of the PDRF. If approved by the Vice-Rector: Academic and Research, the PDRF Co-ordinator will draft a new letter of award to formally extend the term and will follow the formal process of award and acceptance of a PDRF as set out above in paragraphs 5 and 6.