

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO



RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

**POLICY FOR RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF POSTDOCTORAL
RESEARCH FELLOWS**

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UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

POLICY FOR RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

1. PURPOSE

This policy is applicable to postdoctoral fellowships of the University of Limpopo (UL). The purpose of the policy is to describe terms and conditions for the award of the fellowship, tenure activities, termination of Postdoctoral Research Fellows (PDRF) and to set up a framework within which the invitation and appointment of Postdoctoral Research Fellows is conducted at the University of Limpopo. The purpose of the postdoctoral fellowship award is to enable the postdoctoral researcher to engage in a period of uninterrupted research.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1. Postdoctoral Research Fellows is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing.

2.2. Established Researcher: holds a doctoral degree with at least two accredited subsidised publications in the last five years; NRF-rated researcher.

2.3. Partner Institution refers to institutions within and outside South Africa with whom the UL is affiliated.

2.4. Fellowship is the grant of money (made) available to support the PDRF.

2.5. Host refers to the unit/department in the Faculty where the PDRF will be based, for mentorship.

2.6. Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is the agreement between the University and the PDRF, defining the relationship between them.

2.7. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the agreement between the Head of Department (HOD) and the Principal Investigator (PI) on the one hand and the PDRF on the other defining the expectations of each by the other.

2.8. Conditions-of-Award: refers to the conditions of the fellowship concerned.

2.9. Department refers to the academic department, which has undertaken to host the PDRF.

2.10. Head of Department (HOD) refers to the head of department.

2.11. PI refers to the Principal Investigator.

3. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The following values underpin this policy:

- Excellence: promoting and recognizing excellence in research.
- Respect for diversity: active encouragement of critical scholarship and the expression of a multiplicity of opinions and experiences.
- Commitment to development: legitimate and plausible growth/maturity in the designated area of specialization.

4. FUNDING

PDRF awards are funded from a variety of sources. After receipt of the fellowship, any balance on the University-account of the PDRF will be the sole responsibility of that PDRF and the University will not take responsibility for offsetting any outstanding balance at the end of tenure. In all cases, Fellowship funding will be administered by the Department of Research Development and Administration (DRDA). The stipend will be released to the PDRF monthly or at agreed-upon intervals during the year.

5. POSTDOCTORAL FUNDING CATEGORIES

The two categories of postdoctoral funding will be governed by this policy.

5.1. UL Postdoctoral Fellowships

The UL Postdoctoral Fellowship is available to both South African and international graduates, who have obtained their doctoral qualification.

5.2. Partner Institution Postdoctoral Fellowships

These postdoctoral fellowships are limited to students graduating with a doctoral qualification from one of the UL's international and local partner institutions. For internationals, the Office for International Education will liaise with the UL's international partner institutions to source postdoctoral students, according to the needs identified by UL researchers.

6. ELIGIBILITY

Prospective postdoctoral fellows should meet the following criteria:

6.1. Must have completed their doctoral studies at an educational institution preferably within the past 5 years.

6.2. Should preferably be less than 45 years old.

6.3 Preference will be given to South African citizens, especially from previously designated groups.

6.4. May not yet have an established academic career and wish to train further in specialised research.

6.5. Demonstrate the drive and potential to contribute to an identified research theme at UL.

7. CONDITIONS OF AWARD

All Postdoctoral Research Fellowships awards are governed by specific Conditions-of-Award. Such conditions provide a framework for the research/study to be undertaken and basic conditions under which the PDRF is appointed.

7.1 A Post-doctoral fellow is expected to engage in full-time research on an approved niche research area, under the supervision of an Established Researcher, in one of the Faculties of the University.

7.2 Post-doctoral fellows may not do any additional work including teaching, assessment of other students or other contract research. Nor can they hold any temporary employment position.

7.3 Post-doctoral fellows may take on a mentorship / co-supervisory role for postgraduate students in the Faculty.

- 7.4 A fellowship awarded for a specific, registered project must be used for that project only. If the project changes, an application must be made via the appropriate internal project approval system of the University.
- 7.5 The University does not guarantee employment of a post-doctoral fellow, during or after completion of the post-doctoral fellowship contract. Such expectation must never be created.
- 7.6 The post-doctoral fellow must be based at the University of Limpopo for the duration of the award.
- 7.7 Post-doctoral fellows are required to expeditiously publish their research findings. Due acknowledgement to UL must be made by listing UL as institutional affiliation where results of research work are published or presented in any form or publicly disseminated.
- 7.8 A post-doctoral fellow **must** produce at least one DHET accredited publication during the first year of the award or provide proof of acceptance of a paper in a DHET accredited publication.
- 7.9 A holder of the award must inform the DRDA if s/he receives any bursaries, grants or emoluments from other sources during the tenure of the fellowship. The University reserves the right to reconsider the award in the light of such additional awards that a fellowship holder receives.
- 7.10 Post-doctoral fellows who hold post-doctoral awards from external funding may qualify for top-up funding to supplement the award.
- The amount of supplementation will be as stipulated by the external funding agency, where applicable.
 - Where a funding agency does not stipulate the supplementation amount, the University's supplementation will be at a level equivalent to the amount offered to UL's post-doctoral fellows.
- 7.11 **Applications must be submitted in the previous year before the intended year of taking up the scholarship.**

8. DURATION OF FELLOWSHIP

- 8.1. Postdoctoral fellowships are initially awarded for 12-month period of research.
- 8.2. Fellowships may be extended, upon evaluation of progress for a further 12 months minimum and 24 months maximum.
- 8.3. The maximum duration of funding per fellowship holder is 36 months.

8.4. In exceptional cases, a period less than 12 months will be considered for postdoctoral fellowship funding. The application will have to be strongly motivated by the Executive Dean of the relevant Faculty.

9. ADVERTISING, SELECTION AND AWARD

The University as a matter of policy will advertise all opportunities for fellowships, so that free and fair competition is ensured. An exception will apply for postdocs who are funded from external funds and are selected by the researcher during the funding application process.

Selection and recruitment of applicants will be done by the committee authorized to select such candidates. Projects which fall within the identified UL research themes will be given priority. In order to attract PDFs, the recruitment process may not exceed a period of two months.

9.1 Submission procedure

- An Established Researcher submits an application via the HOD and Director of the School to the Executive Dean/DRDA.
- The following documents must accompany the application for a postdoctoral fellowship:
 - An application letter directed to the Executive Dean/Director of Research.
 - Full curriculum vitae of the candidate, including a list of publications.
 - A research proposal (and a summary), written jointly with a chosen principal investigator who is a member of staff of the University, for a research programme to be carried out at the University.
 - The proposal must fall within a larger registered research project area linked to strategic or current niche research areas of the School/ Faculty/ University and include new initiatives, and show how the applicant will interact with other researchers and research students. It should also state milestones in terms of post-graduate throughput and DHET accredited publications.
 - The principal investigator's CV including, post-graduate supervision and publications over the last three years.
 - A supporting motivation and recommendation from the HOD, the Director of the School and the Executive Dean.

- Where applicable, include the conditions under which postdoctoral support was granted by the relevant funding agency.
- The application will be referred to an *ad hoc* committee consisting of the DVC: Academic and Research (Chairperson), the Director of Research (DRDA), the Executive Dean, and the Secretariat from the DRDA for consideration and approval. Decisions made at this Committee will be sent to the SREC for ratification.

Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are held in terms of the standard Memorandum of Agreement. Departments must provide equipment and resources necessary to enable the PDRF to effectively carry out his/her research work. These must be documented in the MoU. The Department must provide an environment where training and learning will take place and where ongoing mentorship/supervision is ensured.

9.2 Evaluation

- The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of research excellence.
- Fellowships are awarded on a competitive basis, taking into account the applicants academic achievements, the research standing of the principal investigator as well as the quality of the proposed programme and its potential for enhancing general research activities and research outputs in the host Unit/Department/ School/ Faculty.
- Ethical approval for the research to be undertaken should be applied for once the postdoctoral fellowship is awarded (if new research is going to be undertaken). It is advisable to have a new project registered in the previous year before a postdoctoral fellow is appointed since approval of a project via the internal project approval system may take up to six months and this will hamper the research outputs which a fellow is bound by contract to produce in a year.
- Once awards are finalised and the relevant documentation signed, funds will be transferred into a “salary” cost centre at the Finance Division for disbursement to the postdoctoral fellow.
- A detailed report must be submitted to the DRDA within two months of completing the 12 month period of research. **The award may be renewed for 12-24 months subject to satisfactory progress**, indicating that an

accredited publication has been published or proof that it is in press or under review.

- The fellowship may be withdrawn at any time by the University if the work or conduct of the holder is considered unsatisfactory.

10. RENEWAL PROCESS

10.1. Renewal of the fellowship is contingent upon the postdoctoral fellow having fulfilled their contractual obligations, and the availability of funds.

10.2. At the beginning of the final month of the fellowship period, the postdoctoral fellow and host are co-responsible for the submission of an application for the renewal of the fellowship.

10.3. It is the responsibility of the mentor to initiate the process for the renewal of the postdoctoral fellowship at least three months to the end of the original fellowship period.

11. POSITION, AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

A PDRF is not a student, nor an employee, but is an academic and professional trainee, known as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. The Fellowship given to PDRFs provides no fringe benefits and the PDRF is not required to provide service in return for the Fellowship value. The PDRF will be given access to adequate amenities and facilities which include the following:

- Work space
- Equipment
- Library borrowing facilities
- Parking facilities
- Membership of the sports and other clubs
- Student Health Services
- Crèche facilities
- Student and/or staff housing

12. ROLE OF POSTDOCTORAL MENTOR

12.1. The role of the postdoctoral mentor is to fulfil the role of host and to make recommendations to DRDA in support of applications for fellowship funding.

12.2. The mentor is responsible for making appropriate logistical arrangements to ensure support for the productivity of the postdoctoral fellow, for example, securing office space, access to computer facilities, access to the library etc.

12.3. The role of the mentor is to facilitate the application for a prospective fellowship by supporting the applicant through the application process.

12.4. Upon approval of the fellowship the mentor is responsible for ongoing mentoring/coaching and monitoring of the fellow within the parameters of the agreed goal(s) and objectives. This process includes the submission of the progress report to DRDA in the 10th month after commencement of scholarship in order to affirm progress and to evaluate the outputs at the end of the fellowship period.

12.5. The mentor is responsible for the approval of progress reports prior to submission to DRDA.

12.6. The mentor is responsible for initiating efforts timeously towards accessing and securing alternative sources of funding to ensure sustainability of the fellowship beyond the period permissible in terms of the provisions of this policy.

12.7. The mentor is responsible for registering the details of the fellow annually with the DRDA.

13. ROLE OF POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

As stated the purpose of a postdoctoral fellowship is to increase the research productivity of units and entities within Faculties at UL through the specific expertise and value that postdoctoral fellows add. The benefit to the postdoctoral fellow is the opportunity to build a research profile and strengthen skills and capacity as a recently qualified doctoral graduate. In order to achieve this purpose:

- The role of the postdoctoral fellow thus clearly needs to focus primarily on research-related activities such as direct research, publication, research collaboration within the host unit/department or entity within a Faculty, co-supervision of postgraduate research, and mentoring of postgraduate students.

14. ROLE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The role of DRDA is as follows:

14.1. To support faculties and departments by facilitating the appointment of postdoctoral fellows.

14.2. To monitor the progress of the postdoctoral fellow to ensure that the UL's strategic objectives are attained.

15. CONTRACTS - MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING/AGREEMENT

The PDRF must enter into a legally binding Memorandum of Agreement with UL, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Faculty/Host-Department.

Such agreements will protect both parties and provide recourse to both parties in the event of a dispute or complaint.

The MoA will ensure compliance with the University's code of conduct, policies and conditions.

The MoU will provide a framework for the work to be done and a means of monitoring the agreed-upon expectations of both parties.

16. INDUCTION/ORIENTATION

The PI will provide the entering PDRF with a comprehensive induction to the UL and the geography of its precincts, guidance to accessing the amenities and facilities available and on-going service and advice.

The HOD or PI will provide the new PDRF with an orientation to the department, and its facilities/amenities, and introduction to the Executive Dean of the Faculty.

17. ACTIVITIES

The academic activities of the PDRF will be described in the Conditions-of-Award and the Memorandum of Understanding. The PDRF will not be required to provide any service in return for the Fellowship-value, and the no-teaching, lecturing or other work that is integral to the training of the PDRF must be fully recorded in the MoU.

The MoU will be used as informal terms-of-reference and/or a guide to resolve any disputes arising between the Department and the PDRF.

18. CODE OF CONDUCT, GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND COMPLAINTS

The PDRF must subscribe to the University's code of conduct and policies.

In the event of any dispute, the PDRF will have recourse to a specific Grievance Procedure and will have right of representation in any hearing that may result from a dispute or serious complaint.

19. TENURE

Each PDR Fellowship is awarded for a period of time specified in the MoA. Such tenure is negotiable up to 36 months.

PDRFs are not permitted to register for any degree during their PDRF tenure, nor are they permitted to be employed full-time by any party within or outside of the University. Work in the form of consultancies may be permitted with the express agreement of the HOD and the Executive Dean of Faculty, who will act as the monitoring agents of such consultancy, and be subject to limitations on hours of work and income derived and must be in compliance with the University's Private Work Policy.

20. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a PDRF is essentially a trainee, the Conditions of Award and the MoU must describe the kind of training and work to be done by both the PDRF and the Department. In addition to this, the University may, from time-to-time provide professional development courses and seminars to assist the PDRFs. The PDRFs may organize seminars and training-courses amongst themselves or for senior students in their specific areas of research, and such events will be hosted and accommodated by the DRDA.

21. TERMINATION

A PDRF's tenure terminates at the end of the specified period, unless renewal has been approved by the UL. Each PDRF will receive a certificate of tenure outlining the

research conducted while at UL. The certificate will be signed by the Executive Dean of Faculty and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

22. TERMINATION FOR CAUSE

A Fellowship may be cancelled at any time due to a material breach of contract and following a hearing, or on disciplinary grounds.

23. PERIOD OF FUNDING

Each postdoctoral fellowship consists of R320 000 per annum, subject to inflation and annual review, **and subject to SARS provisions** (application for tax exemption, if applicable) for the full academic year, **renewable for 12-24 months subject to satisfactory progress.**

24. POLICY REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed every three (3) years. This review will be subject to best practice within the higher education sector.