Grants Management and Systems Administration

Masters and Doctoral Scholarships

Grants Manual 2015

June 2014

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List of Acronyms

APR	Annual Progress Report
DA	Designated Authority
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HICD	Human and Institutional Capacity Development
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
NRF	National Research Foundation

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The Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate of the National Research Foundation processes all grant applications. Details of application guidelines are explained in this document. Please read this document together with the call or framework document for the programme that highlights the programme eligibility criteria and requirements.

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours (08:00 – 16:30):

Tel: (012) 481-4202

E-mail: Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za

1.   Introduction

This Manual provides an overview of the masters and doctoral scholarship programme, application funding guidelines and processes. It should be read in conjunction with the programme call or framework document, which can be accessed at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. It does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

2. Application Process

The NRF issues a call for masters and doctoral scholarship applications which is published on the NRF website and is accessible online at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za.

The masters and doctoral scholarships programme does not accept more than one application per applicant per year.

All applications must be duly authorised and approved by the Designated Authority (DA) of the research administration at the institution that submits the application. Applications must be submitted electronically to the institutional Designated Authority (DA) of the submitting institution for validation, at the deadline date determined per institution. Please query with your institution around their closing dates.

The processing of a successful grant application takes approximately five months from the time of submission until the commencement of funding.

3. How to Submit Applications

Applications can be completed on the NRF Online Submission System at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za from **Wednesday, 10 June 2014.** Applicants are advised to complete their applications as soon as possible to prevent IT system overload near the closing date.

Step 1: This is an electronic submission system and applicants need to be registered on the system in order to create and complete an application. If you previously registered on the NRF Online System (http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za) before February 2012, your details would have been migrated to the new NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za). If you experience problems accessing the

system with your NRF Online password, use the Reset Password button. If you are not yet registered on the NRF Online Submission System, applicants should register to access the application form.
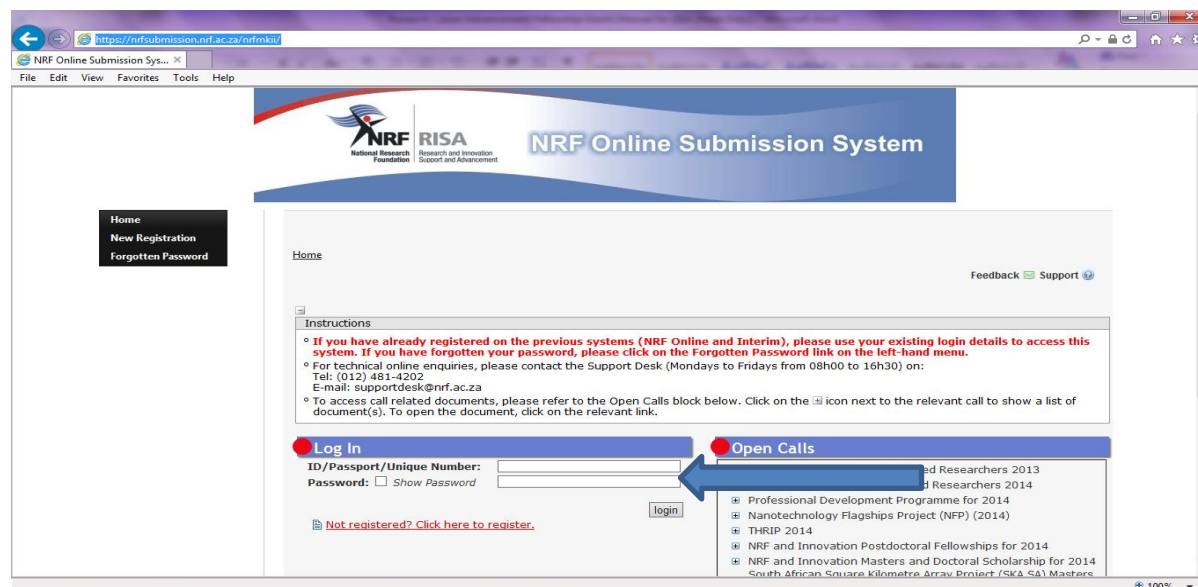
Step 2: Once you have logged in to the NRF Online Submission System, on the landing page, go to the left hand side black menu (tab indicated with blue arrow) to create a new application, go to My Applications-Create Application.
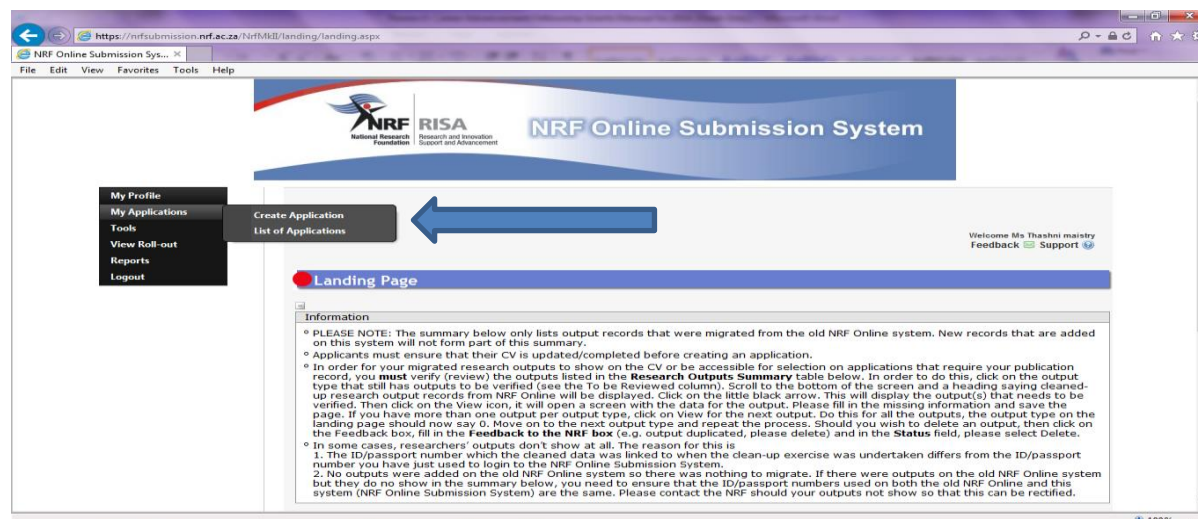

Step 3: Select the funding programme for which you are applying on the create application screen, this will open up a new application for you to complete. Please note this should only be selected once. To continue working on an application, go to My Applications- List of Applications.

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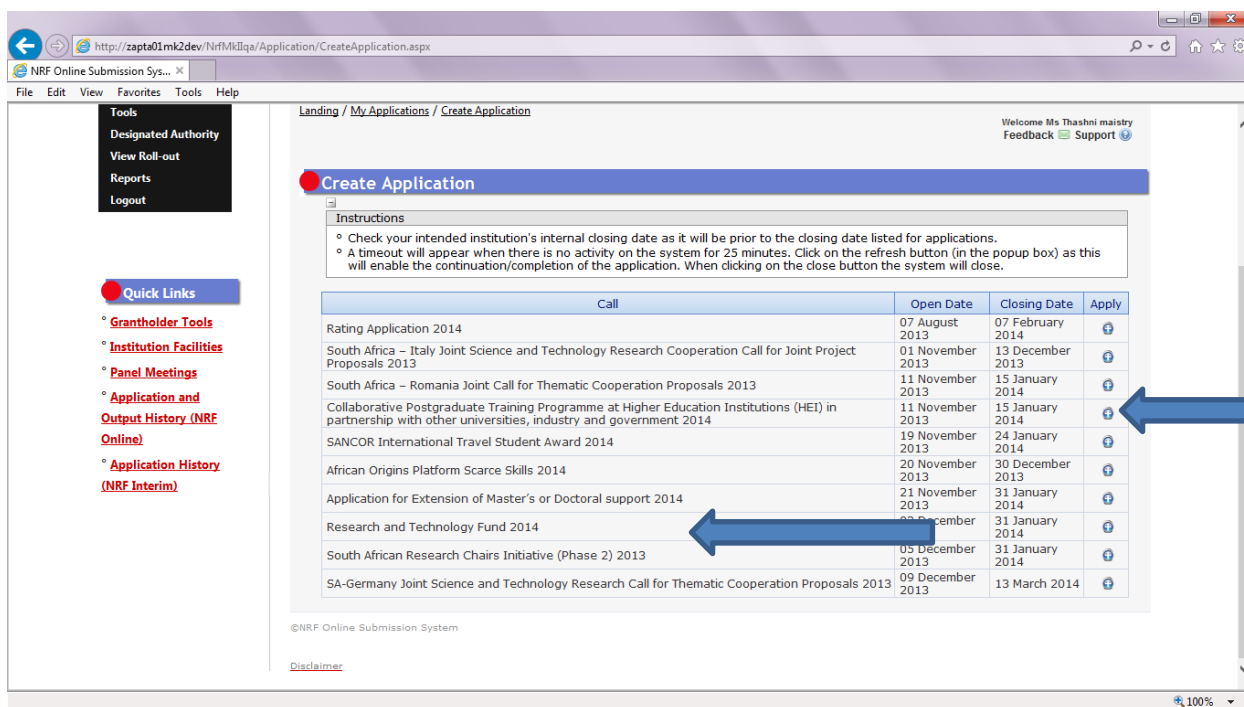
Step 4: Applicants are urged to complete or update ALL screens of the CV, including the Research Profile and Research Outputs (if applicable), as this information is referred to in the review process.

Step 5: All sections marked with a red asterisks are compulsory sections in the application. These sections need to be completed in order for the final submit button to appear. The sections without asterisks are non-compulsory sections. You may enter information in these sections, if you have information to enter, such as research outputs, please enter the information. Completed sections will be indicated by a green tick on the main menu, while incomplete sections have a yellow cross.
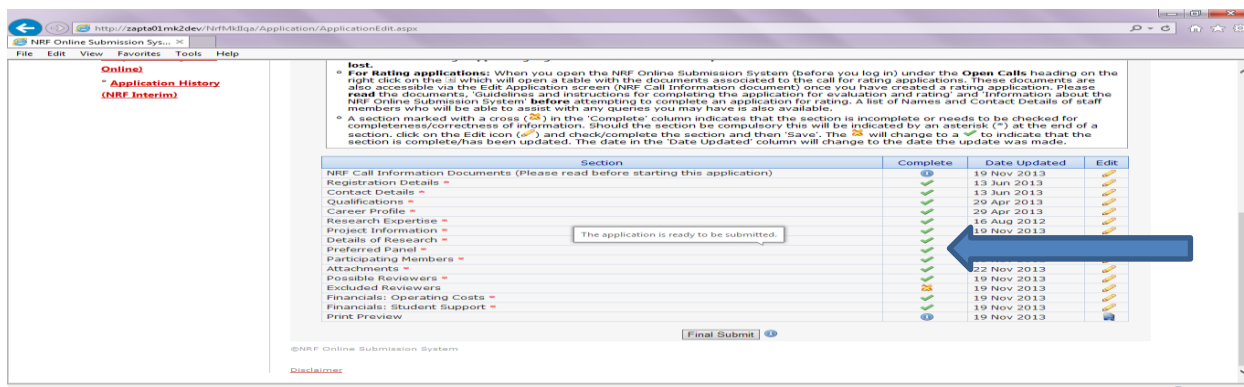
All compulsory sections will guide you with error messages. Please follow these messages to help you complete the section correctly.

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Step 6: Most application screens have screen and application specific instructions to help you work through the section. Please read the instruction carefully before completing the section.

Step 7: Research Project Information section will require you to select from a drop down list your proposed institution. If your institution is not on the list, please request by selecting the information or new button next to the question.
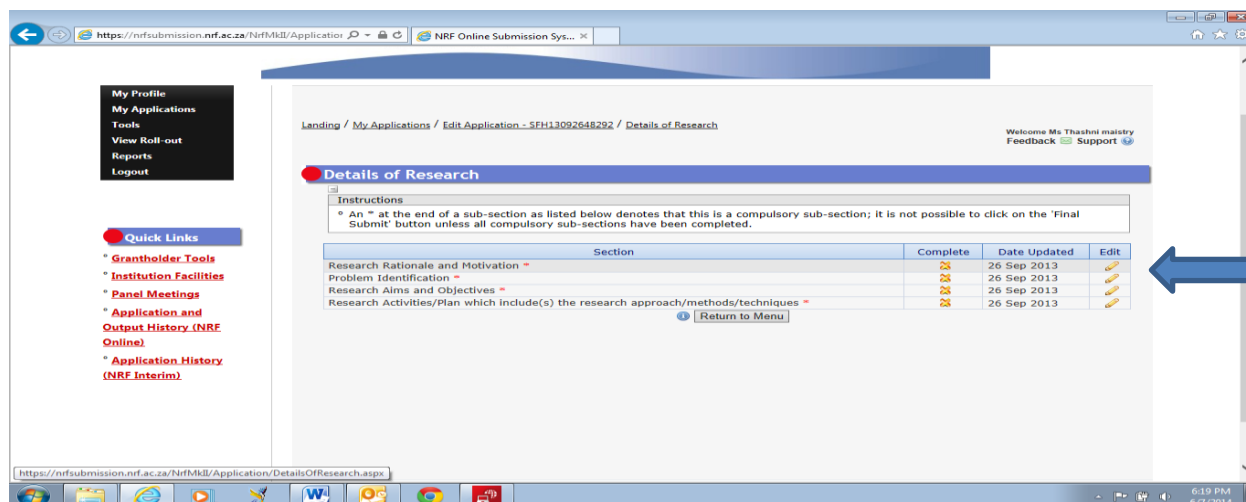

Step 8: In the academic achievement section, please enter your academic average from your previous degree by adding up all your marks and dividing by the number of courses. If your institution does not provide a mark, please enter pass in the field. The review panel will compare the scores entered with your requested academic transcript.

The final submit button will only appear once all compulsory sections are completed. Please remember to submit your application for consideration. When an application has been submitted by the applicant, it is automatically routed to the Designated Authority (DA) in the Research Office or Post Graduate Funding Office of your institution for internal review and validation. Late applications, additional supporting documentation or information received after the closing date will not be accepted or considered.

Step 9:

Step 10: The attachment section provides specific instructions for uploading attachments to the application. Please print, certify and then scan in all documents at once, save as a PDF file and then upload the section as one document. If you are a student with disabilities, you may also upload a medical certificate in support of your disability.

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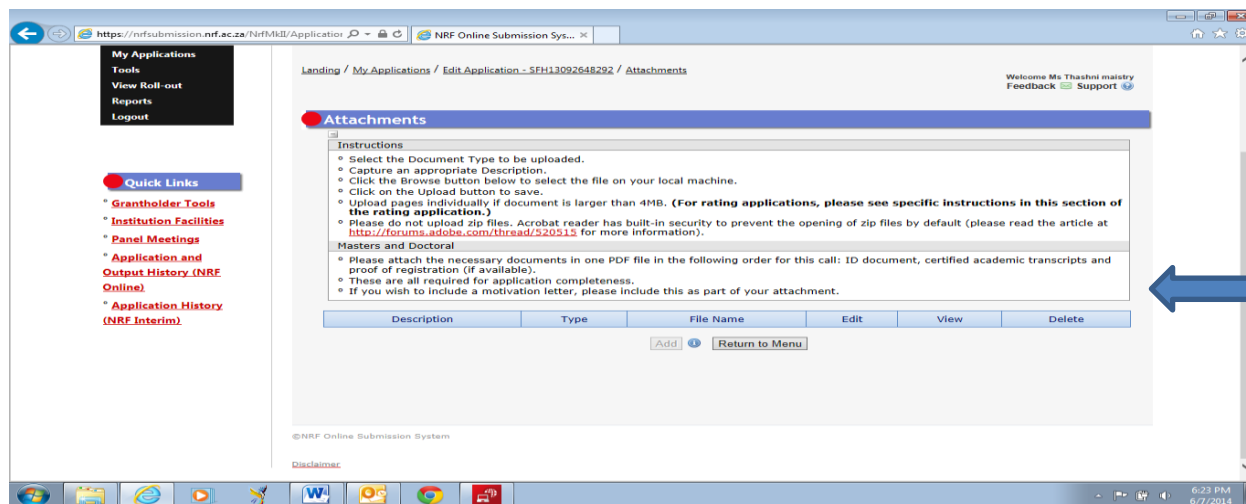
Step 11: <mark>The reference section allows you to include referees for your application. Please make sure your referees are academic references and can comment on your academic abilities. On final submission of the application the reference emails are sent to referees to provide a report on your academic abilities. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the referee email is correct and that the referees have responded as this is assessed in the application. The applicant can check by viewing the application PDF to see if a referee has responded to the request for reference.</mark>

Step 12: Applicants must ensure that they adhere to their institution's internal closing date for submission of their application to allow for internal institutional screening and review. The internal closing date will be determined by the respective research offices or Post Graduate Office and is usually at least two weeks prior to the NRF's closing date.

It is important that all proposals are screened and approved through internal institutional processes **before** being submitted to the NRF. The NRF assumes that the respective DAs are satisfied with the standard of all proposals validated and submitted, and that the institution approves and supports the proposed research.

Step 13: The final submit button will only appear if all compulsory sections are complete. If all the compulsory sections are complete and the final submit button does not appear, please select any section, resave to refresh the application. You will then see the final submit button. Once you have selected final submit the application will be routed to your hosting institution for validation and further consideration by the NRF.

The NRF will not process applications that are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect detail, or fail to follow instructions. Such applications will be rejected. The application must be completed in sufficient detail to allow comprehensive review and evaluation by internal and external reviewers. In addition to the electronic application and required attachments, the NRF may request additional information or documentation to support an application if required. Failure to supply such information or documentation upon request may result in the rejection of the application.

4. Screening and Review Processes

4.1 Overview of the Screening Process

All applications validated by institutions and submitted to the NRF are screened by the NRF for compliance with the requirements of the Call for Proposals as set out in this Manual, as well as the

requirements for completing the online application. Applications that fail to meet the stipulated requirements will be rejected.

4.2 Overview of the Review Process

The NRF's peer review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a review process. Applications submitted to this programme will go through a panel review process.

4.2.1 Panel Review

Panel members are selected from the NRF database and other sources, which is updated on a continuous basis. In making the selection of the panel, the expertise and experience of individuals in application adjudication are taken into account. In assessing the application, agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard.

The Panel provides recommendations to the NRF although the final funding decision is made by the NRF. In awarding grants in this programme, the NRF takes into account the recommendations of the peer review panels, the objectives and targets of the programme, and the available funds.

5. Ranking of Applications

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications, based on programme criteria, in order to determine applicants that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding are evaluated according to a number of predetermined criteria. Applications are assessed and ranked on the basis of criteria as listed in the table below. Each area may be given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used.

NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Master's and Doctoral Scholarship Funding

Criterion	Description
Applicant Academic Potential and Track Record	This refers to the academic potential of the applicant, taking into consideration the applicants exposure to research in the field of study and prizes and awards. Any research outputs listed such as the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents will be considered.
Scientific and Technical Quality of Research Proposal	This refers to scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge; interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary aspects; match between the research question and the proposed research methodology and alignment with the applicant's institutional strategy and/or any national research strategy. Scientific and Technical Quality – Reviewers will evaluate whether the project will * make a contribution to new knowledge and new methodologies in the field(doctoral level only); * apply existing knowledge and methodologies in the field; * involve unique application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field; * or utilise the application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field.

	Research objectives to match aims of study – Reviewers will assess whether the research objectives are clearly stated and whether they are appropriate to meet the aims of the study; are sound but have inconsistencies and can be refined; are appropriate but only partially address the aims of the study; or are not appropriate to meet the aims of the study. Research methodology to match research objectives – Reviewers will comment on whether the research methodology is appropriate to meet objectives of study; is sound but has inconsistencies and can be refined; is appropriate but only partially addresses study objectives; or not appropriate to meet objectives of study. Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects – Reviewers will assess whether Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects have been fully-, partially or not explored in the research proposal. Research Plan- is the research plan feasible and detailed. For students doing a Masters by coursework, this section is not highly weighted; However, some idea of the research topic and understanding is required for assessment. Please make sure that you provide some reference to literature used in these sections.
References	Reference reports are considered in the assessment of the application. These provide an academic account of the student's capabilities in relation to the research and the research field. The reviewers will look for consistencies in the reference reports as well as support for the applicant, proposed research study, capacity to host the research (if required) and evidence of institutional infrastructure or resources to support the applicant and the research.
Potential Impact	Particular attention is paid to proposals with the potential to contribute to the strategic goals of the knowledge economy

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6. Applications Feedback and Disputes

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the recommended funding decision has been approved by the NRF. The NRF will publish a list of results emanating from the programme on the NRF website, www.nrf.ac.za. The application status online will not indicate if the application has been supported for funding. Thereafter, successful applicants will receive a letter of award. This programme does not provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants; if your name does not appear on the list you have not been supported.

Should an unsuccessful applicant require feedback they are requested to follow the process and query via their institutional office. The NRF does not provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants due to the high volume of applicants within this programme

Unsuccessful applicants that wish to appeal the funding decision taken must follow the appropriate Appeals Process of the NRF. Appeals will only be considered for this programme within a two month period after the official date of publishing of the results on the NRF website.

7. Awardee Responsibilities

7.1 Reporting
Continued funding beyond the first year is dependent on the submission of an APR to the NRF during a call for APR's in October/ November of each grant year. Continued funding will be considered based on satisfactory progress.

An Annual Progress Report (APR) must be submitted by the awardee/ grant-holder in a format provided by the NRF, documenting progress made against set objectives and research outputs. The NRF may in consultation with the Research Office, request interim progress reports for the purpose of implementing corrective measures timeously to ensure that stated objectives are met within stipulated timeframes.

7.2 Managing changes during the project life cycle
Changes may occur during the project life cycle due to unforeseen and extenuating circumstances. Please note the following on how to manage the award and subsequent changes (planned or unanticipated) should they arise during the project life cycle.

7.2.1 Change Requests

7.2.1.1 Prior Approval Requests
All change requests must be preceded by prior NRF-approval submitted in writing to the NRF at least 30 days before the proposed change. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be

submitted to the NRF via the Research Office/ Post graduate funding Office for approval prior to the change.

7.2.1.2 Changes in project scope, supervisor or institution

Changes may occur where a project scope, supervisor or institution needs to be changed from the original research proposal, supervisor or institution. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office. The student should notify the NRF in writing of the proposed changes as soon as possible.

8. Scientific Compliance

8.1 Methodology

The student takes scientific responsibility for the research to be undertaken, including its objectives and the methodology outlined in the project proposal. The student is required to devote the necessary time to the research project in compliance with the workplan for the research proposal approved by the NRF so as to achieve the project's stated aims and objectives.

8.2 Intellectual Property Rights

The intellectual capital generated by NRF funded research must be appropriately protected and exploited for the benefit of South Africa. This condition should not interfere with the Intellectual Property Rights arrangements already made, on condition that the majority of the benefits arising from the intellectual capital accrue to South Africa and its citizens. This condition is aligned with the *Intellectual Property Rights Act,*[1] which will override this condition of grant.

8.3 Ethics

The student is required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards in conducting the research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It remains the responsibility of the project leader to comply with all relevant regulations in this regard, including those of the institution at which the research is carried out. An ethical clearance certificate (where applicable) must be submitted to the NRF in respect of successful applications before funding can be released.

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[1]   RSA (2008). Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008. *Government Gazette*, 22 Dec 2008. Vol 522, no 31745.

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