**SOME TIPS TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION**

(By: Imtiaz Khan - May 2018)

IMPORTANT:

1. READ BOTH THE FUNDING GUIDE DOCUMENT AND FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT CAREFULLY!
2. It is very important that you ask your supervisor to proof read or assist you with your application. He/she should be able to guide you, even in terms of some of the comments below.
3. Remember: You are applying for a substantial amount of money from the NRF. As a result, you should provide extensive detail in your application – especially in the details of research section which constitutes the bulk of the scoring when applications are assessed.
4. Consult the call document for the scorecard and refer to the table where it is explained how reviewers will score your application. Ensure that you have addressed what they are looking for.
5. At the end of each section of “details of research” where text is being reference, include the reference list or indicate at the end of the specific section “refer to attached reference list” (upload the reference list as an attachment)
6. All documents must be in ONE pdf file. No word documents or jpeg documents will be accepted. Failure to adhere to this NRF rule will result in your application being rejected.
7. Update your CV on the NRF system before commencing an application on the NRF system!

**FEEDBACK ON SECTIONS:**

**Research Project information**

Please ensure that the project start year and project end year and budget start year and end year are correct. Incorrect information will have negative implications when your application is reviewed

**Academic achievements:**

In this section, you should indicate the average of your previous degree rather instead of stating “pass” unless your average is less than 60%.

**Problem Statement:**

In this section, you need to describe the problem statement informing the proposal/research (minimum a paragraph of about 5lines)

**Rationale and Literature Review:**

* At least provide a page of information in this section (minimum)
* Separate the research rationale from the Literature review by having separate headings.
* The rationale must be well advocated
* Literature must be thoroughly reviewed, relevant, cited, referenced and addresses the existing gaps in knowledge/literature – use in text referencing
* Reference list must be at the end of this section or upload the list as an attachment but state “refer to attached reference list”

**Aims and Objectives:**

* The objectives must be clearly stated and are appropriate to meets the aim(s) of the study.
* Example:

Aim: The aim of the proposed research is to…..

In order to meet the above mentioned aim the following objectives will be met:

Objective 1: To investigate….

Objective 2:…….

Objective 3:……

Objective 4… etc.

(Number your objectives!)

* In this section, you should also state your research questions. The research questions are similar to the objectives listed, but in the form of a question.

Research questions: RQ1 : ……….; RQ2:…….: RQ3….. etc.

**Methodology and Proposed Plan (one of the main sections of the application – should not be less than a page at least)**

* NB: A DETAILED methodology is required (minimum half-three quarter page)
* *If you have already started the project (i.e. if you are going into your 2nd year Masters or 2/3rd year PhD) have a separate heading called “progress to date” and explain in detail the progress obtained thus far with the project by providing the list of research activities (what you’ve achieved to date from date of registration for the degree). Include timeframes when the research activities were achieved.*
* The PROPOSED work plan should contain the following:

1. DETAILED research activities (at least 10 activities minimum over the duration of degree) linked to timeframes . Link the activities to specific objectives listed in the previous section e.g. Activity 1: ……………………….. Jan 2018-Mar 2018 (Objective 1). As an activity, Do not state for example “completion of chapter 3”. You need to provide detail - what chapter 3 actually entails etc.)
2. For each activity, state all persons that will be involved in that specific activity (e.g. yourself, supervisor, participants, collaborators etc.). State these persons roles/expertise/affiliation to the project etc.
3. It is important to mention ALL the resources/equipment/infrastructure Nelson Mandela University has for the project (e.g. library/computers/laboratory/specific equipment names etc.) for it to be adequate to ensure successful completion of the project.
4. Your last 2 activities should be submission of thesis for language editing/proof reading/binding and printing (provide timeframe) and submission of thesis for examination (timeframe).
5. In your work plan, you should include possible research outputs i.e. article publications and conference proceedings. The activity would be for example : “Activity x: Submission of article to a DHET accredited journal for publication” (important to indicate the name of journal you’re targeting [ask supervisor for help?]; which objective the article will be linked and provide a possible title of article if you can) OR To present a paper or poster at the 7th XYZ conference to be held in Cape Town in September 2018 (again, indicate what you want to present on by linking it to a specific objective)
6. Ethical considerations: If your project require ethics approval or permits, you need to indicate this and mention to whom you will be applying for ethics clearance from e.g. As an activity state: Submission of application for ethics approval to Nelson Mandela Universities Research Ethics Committee (Human) or Faculty Postgraduate studies committee – August 2018
7. Projects that are multidisciplinary will be favoured or scored higher but you need to explain how the different aspects thereof are addressed

**Anticipated Outputs:**

There are 3 main research outputs that should be included:

* Masters or PhD thesis (depending which degree you are applying funding for)
* Articles for publication in a peer reviewed journal (; which objective the article is linked to; journal you are targeting; possible title of article)
* Conference presentations (Identify the name of conference you want to present at; where it will be held; present a paper or poster on what?)
* Patents (if applicable)

**Potential Impact:**

In this section, you need to explain in DETAIL the social and economic impact of the research especially in South Africa (or internationally). You need to explain the significance and merits/relevance of the research project. Ensure that the envisaged impact is feasible and relevant (preferably in both national and international context). You can also include FOR EXAMPLE the impact related to research capacity development? Your exposure to conferences; increase in the number of PhD graduates (if applicable) as part of SA’s research development plan

**Alignment to National Strategies:**

Explicitly describe the alignment of the project with at least one but preferably more than one national research priorities. Also align the project to at least one of NMU research themes - Reference **relevant document at the end of the section.**

Attached to the call email are some examples of National Strategy documents as well as Nelson Mandela Institutional Research Themes. IN addition, please find links below to examples of other National strategy documents.

1. <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/143-the-ten-year-plan-for-science-and-technology>

2. <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/174-national-research-a-development-strategy-2002>

3. <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Science_Technology_White_Paper.pdf>

4. <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Bioeconomy%20Strategy_a.pdf>

5. <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/PALEO_STRATEGY_DST_Final_.pdf>

6. <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/DST_Nanotech_18012006_0.pdf>

7. <http://www.gov.za/document?search_query=strategy&field_gcisdoc_doctype=All&field_gcisdoc_subjects=518&start_date=&end_date=&=Search>

<http://www.gov.za/about-sa/science-technology>

In order to score maximum points, you need to align the project to more than one national strategy document by quoting which document it is aligned to and explaining how the project is aligned to what is stated in the relevant document.

**Science Engagement**

Even though this is not a compulsory section, you need to indicate how you will disseminate the findings of the research. Example: Research activities and findings will be communicated by posting a brief project description on the NMMU Estuarine Ecology facebook website (media) or key findings will be communicated to the public by writing an article for publication and presenting at local conferences (community engagement)

**References:**

a) Ensure that you list the number of referees required as per call document and indicate their correct “roles” e.g. Masters/PhD supervisor and a reference (2 in total) or more as per requirement (check call document for what is required)

b) URGENTLY follow up with your referees to complete the referee report (check your application online to see who responded and if the email address listed is correct). If they did not receive the link, email [thembeka.sdinane@mandela.ac.za](mailto:thembeka.sdinane@mandela.ac.za) and request that she resend the link to the referee. All reports must be reflected before 15 June 2018. REFEREES MUST ENSURE THEY SAVE THE REPORT FIRST AND **THEN CLICK ON SUBMIT BUTTON**

**Preferred Panel**

Select the correct panel that you want to review your application. The last thing you want is for your application to go to the incorrect panel as the reviewers will most likely not have the knowledge of your discipline.

**Persons History**

If you were on NSFAS funding, you need to attach proof thereof (letter from NSFAS or student statement reflecting you received funding from NSFAS). Also, if you cannot obtain an academic record due to outstanding debt, then you need to attach a signed stamped student account reflecting this

**Attachments (IMPORTANT)**

Ensure than all required documents AS STATED IN THE FRAMEWORK AND FUNDING GUIDE for this particular call, is attached in ONE pdf file. Please note – ONLY certified and OFFICIAL documents must be attached (official documents are obtainable from departments of student records and student accounts at NMU).

For international students:

\*Must attach a SAQA certificate for grading of transcripts or attach evaluation form from NMMU International Office.

**Applications with outstanding documents will be rejected!**

**Other important sections:**

1. Qualifications: List all obtained qualifications as well as any qualification in progress
2. Career profile: Please note that if the call document requires you to be a full time student and you list a position as permanent, the application will be rejected.
3. Student supervision: Do not put any details in this section unless you personally have supervised a student at Honours, Masters or PhD level

**Personal Profile**

In this section, apart from providing a narrative about yourself, you should also mention all awards/bursaries/prizes received; involvement in any societies/committees; future endeavours. If you have presented at any conference - even Faculty conferences (indicate what you presented on i.e. poster or oral). If you have any articles submitted/accepted or published, also highlight this in this section

**Articles in referred journals/ refereed conference outputs/ other significant conference output’s**

Apart from making mention of your outputs in your personal profile, you MUST list them in the relevant research output sections.