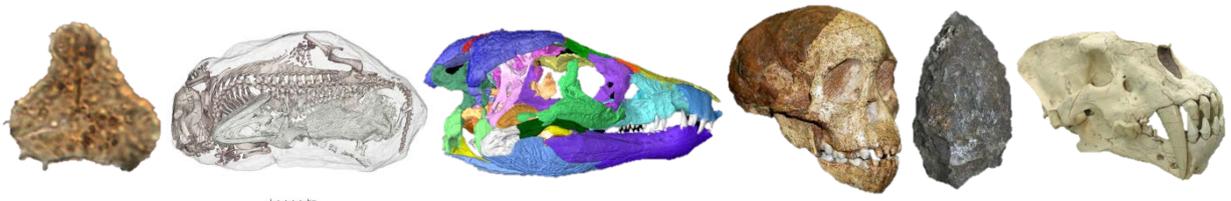


CENTRE OF XCELLENCE PALAEOSCIENCES



Funding Guide

Please read before submitting an application

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The Manager is responsible for the coordination of strategic planning, grant administration processes and management of Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences.

The Project Administrator is responsible for the coordination of the project-related activities to ensure adherence to the timeframes and deliverables of the CoE-Pal.

The Project Finance Administrator is responsible for the management of the funds and the distribution of funds to our partner institutions.

Executive Members

- Prof Bruce Rubidge, Director
- Prof Marion Bamford, University of the Witwatersrand, Theme leader: Palaeo-environments & Palaeoclimates
- Prof Lee Berger, University of the Witwatersrand, Member
- Dr Jennifer Botha-Brink, National Museum Bloemfontein, Theme Leader: Evolutionary Process
- Prof Chris Henshilwood, University of the Witwatersrand, Theme leader: Cultural & Behavioural Evolution
- Prof Judith Sealy, University of Cape Town, Theme Leader: Applications & Innovations
- Dr Roger Smith, IZIKO South African Museum, Theme Leader: Palaeosciences & its Publics
- Dr Christine Steininger, Manager

The Director and the Executive Members are committed to the success of the Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences and they execute their responsibilities and authority in the Institute's interests. They are part of the Panel Review Process that deliberates on the review reports and applications.

1 Introduction

This Funding Guide is intended to inform potential and existing Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences (CoE-Pal) grantholders of the operational procedures for participation in this funding initiative. The Grant Application Guidelines provides an overview of the CoE-Pal funding initiative, including issues of eligibility, grants, the application process, funding guidelines and review procedures.

2 Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences

The Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences Funding Instrument, initiated in 2013, is committed to support high-quality research, public engagement, and productive partnerships with leading institutions.

The National Research and Development Strategy has identified a number of knowledge fields in which South Africa should aim at achieving international research excellence because of our geographical position and natural or cultural heritage. The palaeosciences (collectively including Palaeontology, Palaeo-anthropology, Palaeobotany, Middle Stone Age Archaeology and related disciplines) are areas in which South Africa has a geographical advantage, owing to the quantity and diversity of finds within our national borders.

3 Themes

To focus the research programme of the CoE-Pal, specific research themes have been established that are conceptually linked with four key research questions that are shaped by the South African Strategy for the Palaeosciences. These questions underpin the research effort of the CoE-Pal without stifling creativity and the readiness for serendipitous discoveries. The big research questions are:

1. How does the South African palaeosciences record improve our understanding of the origins of species?
2. What are the key behavioural transitions in hominid prehistory, including the origins of modern human behaviour?
3. What are the Earth systems that drive evolution?
4. What are the roles of extinctions and radiations in the evolutionary process?

To address these questions, five **Research Themes** were identified:

- Evolutionary Process
- Cultural & Behavioural Evolution
- Palaeo-environments & Palaeoclimates
- Applications & Innovations
- Palaeosciences & its Publics

NB: The applicant will be required to select a Research Theme in which their research focus falls under.

4 Eligibility

Those who are eligible are postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows and academic staff from one of our partner institutions:

- University of the Witwatersrand
- University of Cape Town
- Iziko Museums of South Africa
- Ditsong Museum of Natural History
- National Museum of Bloemfontein
- Albany Museum

New Requirements from the NRF:

1. All applicants including researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and postgraduate students are required to have an NRF online profile <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>. These profiles should be current before you apply for CoE-Pal Grants; and continuously updated.
2. All applicants are required to register on ORCID to obtain an ORCID identification number <https://orcid.org>. ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher and, through integration in key research workflows such as manuscript and grant submission, supports automated linkages between you and your professional activities ensuring that your work is recognized. To find out more, <http://orcid.org/about/what-is-orcid/mission>

5 Grants

The CoE-Pal Funding Programme consists of three distinct Grants (Postgraduate Bursaries, Postdoctoral Fellowship and Operational Support). Applicants may apply for funding in the one of the following three grants.

5.1 Postgraduate Bursaries

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the Postgraduate Bursary:

- Postgraduate Bursaries includes Honours, Masters, and Doctorate
- Postgraduates are eligible to apply for a Postgraduate Bursary
- The call for Postgraduate Bursaries only made once a year
- Should have obtained the relevant degree(s)
- Registered for the appropriate degree full-time
- May not be employed full-time
- Proof of registration from one of our partner academic institution must be submitted before funding is released to the designated institution
- Generally be under the age of 45 years at the time of application. *Applicants over the age of 45 should submit a motivation as to why they were not able to achieve their postgraduate degree by the stipulated age*
- Endorsement on the grant application by a nominated supervisor supporting the proposed postgraduate studies to be undertaken
- Must have their research proposal approved by the Head of Department/Institute where they are registered as a student by sending the CoE-Pal a letter of support with the Grant

application

- If a Postgraduate is receiving another NRF grant, the CoE-Pal can only top-up by a maximum of R20 000
- Must submit an Annual Progress Report
- Must submit a Final Report three months after completion of degree

5.2 Postdoctoral Fellowship

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the Postdoctoral Fellowship:

- Eligible to apply for Postdoctoral Fellowship Funding
- Eligible to apply for Operational Support
- The Postdoctoral Fellowship grant is open all year around
- May not be employed full-time
- PhD must be obtained no more than five (5) years ago
- Generally be under the age of 45 years at the time of application. *Applicants over the age of 45 should submit a motivation as to why they were not able to achieve their postgraduate degree by the stipulated age*
- If a Postdoctoral fellow is receiving another NRF grant, the CoE-Pal can only top-up by a maximum of R20 000
- Must submit an Annual Progress Report
- Must submit a Final Report three months after completion of project

5.3 Operational Support

The following eligibility and criteria apply in respect of the Operational Support:

- Academic Staff* and Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible to apply for Operational Support
- The call for Operational Support Funding is only made once a year
- May **only apply for one** Operational Support Grant per year
- Have a PhD certificate
- A research focus has been identified in an area in which the applicant plans to establish a research track record
- Must submit an Annual Progress Report
- Must submit a Final Report three months after completion of project

The Operation Support Grant may be used for:

- The CoE-Pal Operational Support Grant may only be used for research related operating costs of the staff member's research and fieldwork as well as costs for travel and accommodation
- Attendance of local and international conferences where the staff member will present the results of his/her research in an oral presentation or poster
- Attendance of workshops directly related to the NRF funded project
- To invite an international researcher who will be of benefit to your research programme and the visit will result in the production of a publication in a Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accredited journal
- To invite an international speaker who is directly related to the applicant's research and will benefit the host institution
- Journal page costs for printing and inclusion of figures and tables

May not be used for:

- Subscription to journals, inter-library loans, etc
- Membership fees
- Purchase of books, articles, and journals
- Stationery, administrative costs
- Telephone/fax costs
- Purchase of cell phones or airtime

*Academic Staff are academics/researchers, with academic and/or joint academic and administrative professional appointments, at NRF recognised public Higher Education Institutes, Science Councils and other research institutions employed in one of our partner institutions on a full-time permanent or full-time contractual basis.

6 Granting Rules

There are several grants that the CoE-Pal supports. For level of support, value of support and maximum period of support see Table 1.

Table 1. Grants and maximum period of support.

Level	Maximum Value of Support Per Annum	Maximum Period of Support (in years)
Postgraduate Bursaries		
• Honours	R 40 000.00	1
• Masters	R 80 000.00	Up to 2
• Doctoral	R 120 000.00	Up to 3
Postdoctoral Fellowship	R 230 000.00	*Up to 2
Operational Support	R 190 000.00	Not applicable

*New NRF policy for Centres of Excellence. Postdoctoral Fellowship is now a maximum of 2 years. If you are applying for a Postdoctoral Fellowship that has been supported by the CoE-Pal for 2 years and would like another year of funding, your host will need to justify the additional support in their motivation letter.

6.1 Grant Duration

Grants are funded annually. ***To continue funding, applications need to be filled out every year for each one-year funding cycle.*** Renewed applications will not be considered if a progress report has not been submitted.

NB: Funds are made to the institution with which the applicant is affiliated.

6.2 Carry Forward of Grant Funding

In principle, the carry forward of unspent/unclaimed funds to the next grant year is not automatic and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances with strong motivation at least 30 days prior to the end of your grant year. The grant year is considered to be from 01 January to 31 December of each year.

7 Budget Breakdowns and Funding Model

Grants are awarded for well-structured research projects that demonstrate the prudent use of funds. Projects should have clear aims and sound methodologies that support the study objectives. The budgeting model for CoE-Pal takes into account two dimensions, namely the human-capital dimension (in terms of race, gender and disability) and the type of grant. Funds are allocated in terms of a horizontal budget split across the three types of Grants with weights assigned to each Grant on the basis of its relative importance in line with the National Research Foundation (NRF) initiative for the knowledge-based economy strategy.

The intended CoE-Pal budget split in respect of the overall budget is:

- Postgraduate Bursaries: 40%
- Postdoctoral Fellowship: 30%
- Operational Support: 30%

Student intake into this Funding Programme is according to the *Ministerial Guidelines for Improving Equity in the Distribution of the DST-NRF Bursaries and Fellowships* (January 2013). The ratio for such student intake is as follows:

- 87% South African (including permanent residents)
- 5% SADC
- 4% Rest of the African continent
- 4% from non-African countries

8 Application Process and Required Documents

Applicants must complete the application form and submit the required documentation as stipulated in the *Requirement Documents for Grant Applications 7.1*. Incomplete or incorrectly completed applications will automatically be rejected.

- The application should be clear and concise
- Pay particular attention to word limitations stated in the application
- Do not include pictures, figures or diagrams
- Postgraduates and Postdoctoral fellows must have a letter of support from their Supervisor or Host
- All applicants must have a letter of support from their Head of Department/Institute

8.1 Required Documents for Grant Applications

Refer to the following Tables for required documents for applicants.

Required Documents	Postgraduate Bursary	Postdoctoral Fellowship	Operational Support
Up-to-date Curriculum Vitae	✓	✓	✓
Certified Copy of South African Identification Document or Passport for non-South African	✓	✓	✓
Certified Copy of Current Visa for non-South Africans	✓	✓	✓
Letter of Support from Head/Director of School/Dept/Institution	✓	✓	✓
Letter of Support from Supervisor/Host	✓	✓	
Certified Copy of Official PhD Qualification Certificate		✓	
Proof of Registration*	✓		
Certified Copy of Official Academic Transcripts	Honours Bursary only		

* Please note that if your bursary application is successful, the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences will require Proof of Registration. The Proof of Registration should be submitted to CoE.Pal@wits.ac.za before funding is released. Successful Postgraduate Bursary applicants must provide renewed proof of registration annually for the consecutive years of CoE-Pal funding. Failure to comply will lead to the cancellation of the grant.

8.2 How to Submit Applications

The CoE-Pal issues a *Call for Applications* annually, which is placed on the CoE-Pal website and is accessible online at www.ancient-earth.co.za. It is the applicant's responsibility to check that the CoE-Pal has received all the necessary documents.

The *Call for Applications* are distributed by email to various Departments/Schools and members of the CoE-Pal. Applications deadlines are stipulated in the *Call for Applications*. *Please note that there will be no further extension.*

8.3 Screening and Review Processes

All applications submitted to the CoE-Pal are screened for compliance with the requirements of the *Call for Applications*, the stipulations set out in this *Funding Guide*, and the content requirements indicated in the Application. Applications that fail to meet the requirements and stipulations are rejected.

The CoE-Pal peer review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a two-tiered review process, namely, firstly the application is sent to two reviewers to score; and secondly for panel review unless changes are otherwise stipulated by the CoE-Pal Executive Committee.

Applications are sent for review to the CoE-Pal Executives assigned to the relevant themes. In addition, applications may be sent to researchers with selected research knowledge or insight in the

relevant themes. The review report scores, together with the application and supporting documentation are then deliberated upon in the panel review process. For more information on the CoE-Pal Executive Committee go to www.ancient-earth.co.za.

8.4 Ranking of Proposals

The purpose of the ranking system is to evaluate proposals, based on the CoE-Pal Funding Programme criteria, in order to determine which applicants are most deserving of the funds available. All research proposals submitted to the CoE-Pal for funding are evaluated according to a number of predetermined criteria. Proposals are assessed and ranked on the basis of qualifiers as listed in the table below. Each area is given a score of 0 to 4, 4 being the highest score, to indicate its relative importance. The decision of the panel is final and no negotiations will be considered.

Criteria

1. Scientific Quality

Reviewers will evaluate whether the project will make a contribution to new knowledge and new methodologies in the field: (1) apply existing knowledge and methodologies in the field; (2) involve unique application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field; and/or (3) utilise the application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field. Does the research fit within the appropriate themes of the Center of Excellence in Palaeosciences?

2. Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary Aspects

Reviewers will assess whether Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects have been fully-, partially or not explored in the research proposal.

3. Research Objectives

Reviewers will assess whether the research objectives are clearly stated and on 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.

4. Materials and Methods

Reviewers will comment on whether the research materials and 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.

5. Expected Academic Outputs

This refers to NRF recognised research outputs such as the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; and books and book chapters. Successful applicants will be expected to deliver on all anticipated outputs or risk suspension of their funding. Reviewers will be required to assess whether the proposed outputs are fully-, partially- or not achievable within the given timeframe.

6. Social Impact

Particular attention is paid to proposals with the potential to contribute to the Science Communication and Public Engagement. Does the applicant have a plan of action with proposed timelines?

7. Budget (Operation Support only)

Does the applicant demonstrate effective planning and budgeting of resources within the timeframe of the proposed research plan?

8. **Track Record of Applicant** (Operational Support only)

Reviewers will access the applicant's research record and standing to suggest if the applicant has the appropriate research experience to undertake the proposed research? This refers to outputs such as the professional development of the applicant: journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; and books and book chapters, etc.

Does the applicant have a good record of past students supervised that address equity and redress?

8.5 **Application Feedback**

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the funding decision recommendations have been approved by the CoE-Pal Director, the applicants will be notified, in writing, of the outcome.

The processing of a grant application takes approximately three months from the time of submission to the announcement of the outcome of the review of the application.

This section should be read in conjunction with Section 5.2 of this document (Funding Duration) as well as the CoE-Pal Contract that needs to be signed by the Grantholder and the Institution in order for the Grant to be valid.

9 **Grantholders Responsibilities**

9.1 **Acknowledgements**

The Grantholder will acknowledge the support of the CoE-Pal, on the title page of all papers, publications, presentations and thesis/dissertation that emanate from the study and/or workshop, as follows:

"The support of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences (CoE in Palaeosciences) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the CoE in Palaeosciences"

9.2 **Reporting**

Continued funding beyond the first year is dependent on the *submission of an Annual Progress Report to the CoE-Pal of each grant year*. Continued funding will be considered based on satisfactory progress.

A Final Report must be submitted three months after completion of the project.

Financial reporting forms part of the Final Report and should be completed with the assistance of the institution's Financial Officer.

The Annual Progress Report and Final Report should be submitted online, www.ancient-earth.co.za under Grants.

9.3 Changes to Project

Changes may occur during the project due to unforeseen or 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.

9.3.1 Change Requests

All change requests must be submitted in writing at least 30 days before the proposed change. The request must have institutional endorsement by the Head of Department/Institution and be submitted to the CoE-Pal.

A CoE-Pal Postgraduate Bursary or Postdoctoral Fellowship grantholders may not transfer their grant to another grantholder or institution.

9.3.2 Changes in Project Scope

Changes may occur where a project scope needs to be modified from the original research proposal/project design. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the CoE-Pal. Grantholders should notify the CoE-Pal in writing of the proposed changes as soon as possible.

9.4 Scientific Compliance

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

9.5 Intellectual Property Rights

The intellectual capital generated by CoE-Pal 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*, which will override this Condition of Grant.

9.6 Ethics

A grantholder 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 CoE-Pal in respect of successful applications before funding can be released.

9.7 Access to Data

The data generated from the proposed research must become available to other researchers working in the same field. Therefore, it is important that the data is provided to domain specific data sets to the NRF South African Data Archive (SADA), <http://sada.nrf.ac.za>.

9.8 Supervision

For Postgraduate Bursaries, the appointed supervisor has a commitment to the grantholder. They must ensure that such students receive adequate supervisory support to undertake project-related research that contributes towards the degree for which the students are registered.

9.9 Premature Termination

If a grantholder is unable to complete a research project for which the CoE-Pal has awarded a grant, it is the responsibility of the grantholder, through their institution's DA, to notify the CoE-Pal Director of the intention to prematurely terminate the project. Premature termination of a research project may occur for a number of reasons. Taking into account the circumstances and reasons for termination the grantholder, in consultation with the CoE-Pal, will decide on the best course of action and possible outcomes including, but not limited to, the final termination of the project and the recall of funds expended. Irrespective of the decision taken, the grantholder is required to submit a Final Report to the CoE-Pal. The progress report will be used in considering any further applications for CoE-Pal funding to complete the work, according to the criteria applicable to the Funding Instrument to which any such application is submitted.