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DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

NO. 7137 **16 February 2026**

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION ACT, 1998

REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE DECLARATION OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS ELIGIBLE FOR GRANT FUNDING

The Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation intends, in terms of section 23(1)*(d)* of the National Research Foundation Act, 1998 (Act No. 23 of 1998), and after consultation with the Board, to make the regulations in the Schedule.

Any person who wishes to submit written comments on the draft Regulations is hereby invited to do so within 30 days from the date of publication hereof by—

(a) posting such comments to the following address:

Private Bag X 894

PRETORIA

0001;

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(b) delivering such comments by hand at the following address:

DSTI Building

CSIR Campus

Meiring Naude Road

Brummeria

0184; or

(c) e-mailing such comments to the following address:

*Monwabisi.Mfihlo@dsti.gov.z*a or *Rose.Msiza@dsti.gov.za*

Comments must be addressed to the Director-General: Science, Technology and Innovation, and marked for the attention of *Mr Monwabisi Mfihlo / Ms Rose Msiza*.

Comments received after the closing date may not be considered.

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SCHEDULE

Arrangement of regulations

1. Definitions
2. Purpose
3. Requirements for declaration of research institution eligible for grant funding
4. Process for declaration of research institution
5. Review of status of research institution
6. Withdrawal of declaration of research institution
7. Short title and commencement

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Definitions

1. In these regulations, unless the context indicates otherwise, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act has the same meaning, and:

"NSI" means a national system of innovation, which is a set of functioning institutions or organisations which interact constructively, aligned to policies, in the pursuit of a common set of research-based or research-driven social and economic goals and objectives;

"Relevant Authority" means an organisation that is authorised or mandated to regulate the operations of a research institution;

"Research Infrastructures" means facilities, resources, and services which include but are not limited to major scientific equipment, cyber or information and communication technology platforms, scientific collections, archives and structured information, and entities of a unique nature used by the scientific community to conduct research and innovation and create, transmit, exchange and preserve knowledge; and

"the Act" means the National Research Foundation Act, 1998 (Act No. 23 of 1998).

Purpose

2. The purpose of these regulations is—

(a) to ensure that research institutions are declared as a research institution in order to expand the South African research system and promote its responsiveness

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to the country's social, economic, scientific and technological needs, while ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public funds; and

(b) to provide criteria and guidelines which the Minister considers necessary and expedient for the declaration of a research institution eligible to receive grant funding from the Foundation in terms of section 5A of the Act.

Requirements for declaration of research institution eligible for grant funding

3. In order to be declared as a research institution eligible to receive grant funding from the Foundation an institution must—

(a) be an institution with public research mandate that is of national importance and scale;

(b) have research as a core activity;

(c) conduct research in order to create, among others, new knowledge, products, applications and services for advancement of science and benefit of society;

(d) have basic research infrastructure;

(e) have in its staff component employees that have—

(i) a track record of conducting research and of published research outputs; and

(ii) provided supervisory capacity for training and skills development of science, engineering and technology postgraduate students;

(f) be registered with the Relevant Authority;

(g) if it is not a higher education institution, must partner with an accredited institution offering postgraduate qualifications; and

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(h) demonstrate the existence of appropriate administrative, financial, operational and governance frameworks and capacity to support its legislative compliance and long-term sustainability.

Process for declaration of research institution

4. The process for declaration as a research institution is as follows:

(a) The Foundation must issue a call to invite applications from interested eligible institutions;

(b) Institutions are required to complete an online application on the Foundation's website or other designated electronic platform by completing an online form that corresponds substantially with Form RI 1 of Annexure A;

(c) The Minister, after consultation with the Foundation, may consider inputs of persons with appropriate knowledge, expertise and experience, prior to approving an application under paragraph *(b)*; and

(d) The Minister must communicate the outcomes to the applicants.

Assessment of status of research institution

5. The Minister may at any time, after consultation with or at the request of the Foundation, conduct an assessment of a research institution in order to determine its suitability to remain a declared research institution eligible to receive grant funding from the Foundation.

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Withdrawal of declaration of research institution

6. (1) The Minister may withdraw the declaration of a research institution, as contemplated in section 5A of the Act, if—

(a) the research institution ceases to meet the requirements for declaration as a research institution as set out in regulation 3;

(b) the outcome of the assessment in terms of regulation 5 indicates that the research institution is no longer suitable to remain as a research institution eligible to receiving grant funding from the Foundation; or

(c) the research institution is putting the NSI into disrepute.

(2) The Minister must, after having considered any representations by the relevant research institution and after consultation with the Foundation, communicate the decision of withdrawal to the research institution.

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ANNEXURE A

Form RI 1 – Application Form for Declaration as a Research Institution

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FORM RI 1

APPLICATION TO BE DECLARED AS A RESEARCH INSTITUTION

(Regulation 4)

1. NAME OF APPLYING INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION / COMPANY:

2. INDICATE NAME & CONTACT DETAILS OF PERSON REPRESENTING INSTITUTION:					
Title		Initials		Surname	
Signature					
ID Number					
Designation					
Email address					
Telephone number	( )				
NB! A letter of delegation, signed by the chief executive (or similar) indicating that the above-mentioned person is acting on behalf of the institution must be attached					
Has the letter of delegation been attached?	Yes		No		

3. INDICATE THE LEGAL STATUS (More than one block may be crossed)					
State-funded research institution	Private higher education institution	NGO	Private or public company	Institute associated with a Public higher education institution	Other
If the "other" category was selected, describe the nature of the institution					

4. BASED ON THE ABOVE SELECTION COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE SECTION:				
4 a. PUBLIC, PRIVATE, NGO, or other:				
Registration Number				
Vat Registration Number				
NB! Provide Tax Compliance Status PIN (If registered)				
Is a Tax Compliance Status PIN provided?	Yes		No	
Name and Contact details of external auditors				
Copy of a letter confirming appointment of external auditors	Yes		No	

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What percentage of the annual expenditure is spent on research?	
Knowledge and Innovation Outputs in the last three years	
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 (Before year of application)

4 b. INSTITUTE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH A PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION				
Registration Number				
Vat Registration Number				
NB! Attach a current tax clearance certificate				
Is Tax Clearance Certificate attached?	Yes		No	
Name and Contact details of external auditors				
Copy of a letter confirming appointment of external auditors	Yes		No	
Does the institution have its own human resources system	Yes		No	
Does the institution have its own finance system	Yes		No	
What percentage of the annual expenditure is spent on research?				
What services provided by the university does the institution rely on?				
Knowledge and Innovation Outputs in the last three years				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 (Before year of application)		

5. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FULLY BUT USE ONLY THE SPACE ALLOCATED:
What type of support do you require from the Foundation? **Limit response to 5 lines**!
Motivate why the Foundation should offer you support? **Limit response to 5 lines**!
What is the extent and type of research contained in the strategy of the institution (i.e. what percentage of the institution's activities are focused on research, and is basic and/or applied research being undertaken)? **Limit response to 10 lines**!

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Which strategic needs and/or priority areas of the Department does the institution's research address? **Limit response to 10 lines**
What is the institution's policy on the use, storage and dissemination of research results? **Limit response to 5 lines**!
What percentage of the institution's activities is focused on post-graduate student supervision? Explain your answer. **Limit response to 5 lines**!

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Name	Designation	Signature	Date

OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT	
Regret	
Reasons	

SUPPORT FOR:	
Free Standing Bursaries	
Postdoctoral fellowships	
Research Infrastructure	
Grants	
Special limitations	

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NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION ACT, 1998

REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE DETERMINATION OF INSTITUTIONS AS NATIONAL RESEARCH FACILITIES

DRAFT

The Minister of Science, Techology and Innovation intends, in terms of section 5(4) of the National Research Foundation Act, 1998 (Act No. 23 of 1998), to make the Regulations in the Schedule.

Any person who wishes to submit written comments on the draft Regulations is hereby invited to do so within 30 days from the date of publication hereof by—

(a) posting such comments to the following address:

Private Bag X 894

PRETORIA

0001;

(b) delivering such comments by hand at the following address:

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DSTI Building

CSIR Campus

Meiring Naude Road

Brummeria

0184; or

(c) e-mailing such comments to the following address:

Charles.mokonoto@dsti.gov.za

Comments must be addressed to the Director-General: Science, Technology and Innovation, and marked for the attention of Mr Charles Mokonoto. Comments received after the closing date may not be considered.

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SCHEDULE

Arrangement of regulations

1. Definitions
2. Purpose
3. Requirements for determination of national research facility
4. Application for incubation
5. Incubation of entity prior to determination as national research facility
6. Access policy
7. Process for determination or withdrawal of determination of national research facility
8. Circumstances under which determination of national research facility may be withdrawn
9. Existing national research facilities
10. Short title and commencement

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Definitions

1. In these regulations, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act shall have the meaning so asigned, and unless the context indicates otherwise —

"access policy" means the policy adopted by each national research facility which defines the principles and criteria applicable to users to access the national research facility as set out in regulation 4 of these regulations;

"excellence-driven access" means access given exclusively to a user dependent on the scientific excellence, originality, quality, rigour, relevance, and technical and ethical feasibility of an application by a user;

"incubation" means the creation of an enabling environment, which may be inclusive of financial, technical or administrative support by the foundation for an institution to fully develop into a national research facility;

"NSI" means a national system of innovation, which is a set of functioning institutions and organisations which interact constructively in accordance with policies, in the pursuit of a common set of research-based or research-driven social and economic goals and objectives;

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"open data and data sharing" means the practice of making publicly-funded research data and information publicly available, subject to meeting the requirements of the national research facility's data policy and national and international open data and data sharing policies, principles and practices, where appropriate;

"Research Infrastructures" mean facilities, resources, and services which include but are not limited to major scientific equipment and infrastructure, cyber or information and communication technology infrastructure, scientific collections, archives and structured information, and entities of a unique nature used by the scientific community to –

(a) conduct research and innovation; and

(b) create, transmit, exchange and preserve knowledge.

"the Act" means the National Research Foundation Act, 1998 (Act No. 23 of 1998); and

"user" means any juristic or natural person contemplated in the Act that may apply and be granted access to utilise a national research facility for research, development, innovation /or instruction, in accordance with these regulations and access policy of the national research facility.

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Purpose

2. The purpose of these Regulations is to regulate the determination of a research facility as a national research facility.

Requirements for determination as a national research facility

3. (1) An institution must—

(a) be purposed to provide unique and cutting-edge single-sited or distributed research infrastructure to conduct fundamental and applied research, drive innovation and contribute to human capital and research capacity development;

(b) meet the requirements set out in regulation 3(2); and

(c) comply with the requirements set out in regulation 6,

in order to be eligible for determination as a national research facility.

(2) An Institution must —

(a) be an institution with a public research mandate and operating at a national level;

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(b) provide access, services and capabilities to the NSI, researchers and students at no cost;

(c) have substantial infrastructure, capabilities, expertise and services for internationally competitive research, development and innovation to advance the national research agenda and the mandate of the Foundation;

(d) possess strategic capabilities that can contribute to having capacity to offer human and research capacity development opportunities in science, engineering and technology;

(e) incorporate capacity to undertake advancement of science in line with its research mandate;

(f) provide infrastructural capacity and services that attract or have the capability to attract users, who intend to use it for advancement of their scientific research or the advancement of such national research facility's mandate;

(g) contribute holistically or strategically to the research ecosystem of South Africa;

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(h) contribute to the sustainable development of South Africa through research, innovation and the related human capacity development;

(i) have capacity to provide access to its research infrastructures, data and services to all users within and outside South Africa's borders in accordance with its access policy;

(j) demonstrate the existence of appropriate administrative, financial, operational and governance frameworks and capacity to support its legislative compliance and long-term sustainability;

(k) demonstrate the existence of a long-term financial plan that is commensurate with its operational requirements; and

(l) if incubated, have fulfilled the requirements for incubation, based on a suitable evaluation, assessment or review.

Application for incubation

4. (1) An institution must, for it to be declared as a national research facility, apply to the Foundation for incubation.

(2) An application contemplated in subregulation (1) must be made online on the Foundation's website or other designated electronic platform by completing an online form that corresponds substantially with Form 1 of Annexure A.

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(3) The Foundation may accept a research facility for incubation if it meets the following minimum requirements for incubation:

(a) Its infrastructure and services provided include or have the potential to include a unique capability that can contribute to research and human capacity development and advancement of science;

(b) its infrastructural capacity and services attract or have the potential to attract users who intend to use it for the advancement of the users' scientific research or the advancement of such institution mandate; and

(c) provide open access to its research infrastructures, data and services to all users within and outside South Africa's borders in accordance with its access policy.

(4) An institution applying for incubation must, in consultation with the Foundation, determine and secure the funding requirements for the incubation period.

Incubation of entity prior to determination as national research facility

5. (1) The Foundation must conduct comprehensive due diligence and feasibility studies to support the science strategy and business plan of

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a research facility contemplated in regulation 3, and ensure alignment with the NSI and the mandate of the Foundation prior to its incubation.

(2) The Foundation must incubate the research facility in line with the Foundation's policies and processes and ensure that the following are achieved:

(a) A long-term science strategy and associated infrastructure requirements for the research facility, that are aligned with the NSI, and the mandate of the Foundation, are developed together with a business plan incorporating the resources and associated funding that are required to fully operate the research facility;

(b) appropriate training programmes to upskill personnel of the research facility;

(c) etablishment of an advisory structure inclusive of international experts to ensure the long-term sustainability and scientific competitiveness and relevance of the research facility;

(d) recruitment of appropriate personnel at all levels required to fulfil the purpose of the research facility;

(e) establihsment of appropriate regulatory compliance systems, where required;

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(f) development of a strategy for the provision and sale of products or services, where applicable;

(g) faciliation of the establishment of strategic partnerships and collaborations for the research facility; and

(h) investigation of other funding sources for the research facility.

Access policy

6. (1) Upon determination, a national research facility must have an access policy which regulates user access to the research facility.

(2) The access policy contemplated in subegulation (1) must make provision for —

(a) the control of access to the infrastructure and facilities of the research institution, which must include physical, virtual and remote access;

(b) the regulation of open science and open innovation;

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(c) the regulation of open data and data sharing (of publicly-funded data), upholding the 'principle of open as possible and closed as necessary;

(d) the regulation of excellence-driven access based on peer-reviewed evaluation of research proposals;

(e) the promotion of transformation in line with the the Foundation's transformation policies;

(f) the criteria for balancing international and national interests; and

(g) the regulation of access based on whether the user is from the commercial or the public sector.

Process for determination or withdrawal of determination of national research facility

7. (1) The Foundation may consider the outcome of —

(a) a national review of a science, technology and innovation;

(b) a national research foresight exercise;

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(d) a national science and technology landscape review; or

(e) other systematic and formal review process,

in making a recommendation contemplated in section 4(1)(mA).

(2) The Foundation must, before a recommendation contemplated in subregulation (1) may be made in respect of any research facility,—

(a) satisfy itself that the requirements set out in regulation 3 have been met or the circumstances referred to in regulation 8 are present, as the case may be;

(b) publish the intention to recommend the research facility for determination as a national research facility or the withdrawal of a national reaseach facility in terms of section 5(1) of the Act, as the case may be, in the *Gazette* for a period of not less than 60 days, inviting the public to submit written comments on the proposed determination or withdrawal, as the case may be; and

Circumstances under which determination of national research facility may be withdrawn

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8. The determination of a national research facility may be withdrawn if any one of the following occurs -

(a) The national research facility ceases to meet the requirements for determination as a national research facility as set out in these regulations.

(b) The objective and mandate of a national research facility have been fulfilled or have become redundant.

(c) A review of the national research facility's performance and mandate determines that its specific objectives are not being met and will not be met in the future.

(d) For reasons relating to a change to the national policy for research and innovation.

(e) The national research facility is transferred, for whatever reason, out of the control of the Foundation.

Existing national research facilities

9. (1) All research facilities determined as national research facilities under the control of the Foundation in terms of the Act prior to the promulgation

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of these regulations, shall be deemed to be national research facilities as defined in the Act

(2) The Foundation must, within a period of 5 (five) years from date of promulgation of these regulations, review the national research facilities contemplated in subregulation (1) in order to ensure alignment of these national research facilities with these Regulations, where necessary.

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ANNEXURE A

Form 1

Application Form for Incubation

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FORM 1

APPLICATION TO BE DECLARED AS A NATIONAL RESEARCH FACILITY (Regulation 4)

1. NAME OF APPLYING INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION / COMPANY:

2. INDICATE NAME & CONTACT DETAILS OF PERSON REPRESENTING INSTITUTION:					
Title		Initials		Surname	
Signature					
ID Number					
Designation					
Email address					
Telephone number	( )				
NB! A letter of delegation, signed by the chief executive (or similar) indicating that the above-mentioned person is acting on behalf of the institution must be attached					
Has the letter of delegation been attached?	Yes		No		

3. INDICATE THE LEGAL STATUS (More than one block may be crossed)			
State-funded research institution	NGO	Private or public company	Other
If the "other" category was selected, describe the nature of the institution			

4. BASED ON THE ABOVE SELECTION COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE SECTION:				
4 a. PUBLIC, PRIVATE, NGO, or other:				
Registration Number				
Vat Registration Number				
NB! Provide Tax Compliance Status PIN (If registered)				
Is a Tax Compliance Status PIN provided?	Yes		No	
Name and Contact details of external auditors				
Copy of a letter confirming appointment of external auditors	Yes		No	

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What percentage of the annual expenditure is spent on research?	
Knowledge and Innovation Outputs in the last three years	
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 (Before year of application)

5. Kindly provide a narrative under the following themes:
Research Agenda
Core research team
Non-financial support
Current financial viability
Future sustainability and succession plan
Quality of collaborative research outputs
Human Capital Development
Equity and redress
Alignment to national imperatives
Science engagement and visibility
Governance structure
Access of Users

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OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT	
Regret	
Reasons	

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