



# GENUS

PALAEOSCIENCES

A DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence

## Next Generation Palaeoscience Postdoctoral Fellowship Funding Guide

**Welcome to GENUS. Your journey towards making a boundless impact starts here.**

The GENUS Next Generation Palaeoscience (NGP) Postdoctoral Fellowship enables researchers to achieve their greatest research ambitions while collaborating with one of Africa's most inclusive Palaeoscience communities.

The GENUS NGP Postdoctoral Fellowship provides an opportunity to give time and resources to research productivity. A strong applicant will meet the three key elements: an emerging leader, a high-quality research project, and an active science communication platform.

At GENUS, we know that we can only illuminate the origins of our world when individuals from all walks of life participate in palaeoscience research. That's why we advocate for equal representation in science, actively transforming the palaeo-landscape throughout South Africa. Our diverse community of students, researchers, and partners has moulded our vision and mission to continue to enable real impact.

To help you navigate the process of applying for a GENUS Research Grant, we have put together this Funding Guide, complete with useful insights into eligibility, application requirements, and the review process. Or go to the [GENUS](#) website for more information on the [GENUS NGP Postdoctoral Fellowship Funding Guide](#).

Learn more about [Tips for Creating a Winning Grant Application](#).

### Support

There are two types of GENUS NGP Postdoctoral Fellowship support:

1. The GENUS NGP Postdoctoral Fellowship is R350 000 annually for two consecutive years.
2. You are eligible to apply for top-up funding to the maximum of R20 000 even if you have received a fellowship outside of the GENUS funding platform.

GENUS supports the NGP Postdoctoral Fellowships and top-ups through the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence in Palaeosciences Funding Platform.

## Timelines

Opens: 01 August  
Closes: 02 September  
Review: November  
Outcomes: December – January

## Eligibility

1. The GENUS NGP Postdoctoral Fellowship is open to all who meet our eligibility requirements.
2. Our funding allocations firmly adhere to those outlined by the DSI-NRF Funding Framework, with 95% of our fellowships being given to South African citizens and permanent residents and only 5% to countries outside South Africa.
3. The applicant should be in the completion stage or have a PhD in one of the palaeoscience disciplines.
4. Full-time only.
5. May not be employed full-time in another position concurrently if the applicant is successful.
6. Must be 35 years old or younger. If you are over 35, please provide us with a motivation letter.
7. The applicant should have received their doctoral certificate within the last five (5) years.
8. The applicant must be accepted and hosted by one of our partner institutions to apply:
  - Nelson Mandela University
  - North-West University
  - University of Cape Town
  - University of the Free State
  - University of Pretoria
  - Rhodes University
  - University of the Witwatersrand
  - Albany Museum
  - Ditsong National Museums of Natural History
  - Iziko Museums of South Africa
  - National Museum, Bloemfontein
9. Your research must fit into one of the research themes listed below, ranging from the Precambrian to the Middle Stone Age up to 30 000 years ago. If your research project focuses on climate science that examines material between 30 000 and 10 000 years old, you must strongly emphasise and motivate how your research impacts deep time (30 000 years and older).
10. Research Themes that we support:
  - *Evolutionary Processes*: This theme focuses on the southern African palaeobiodiversity; studying the timing of evolutionary events in major clades and significant climatic events, characterising the global geographic distribution of fossil taxa; investigating the nature of functional morphology and critical innovations in morphological evolution.
  - *Cultural and Behavioural Evolution*: This theme explains the key long-term material culture and behavioural transitions in hominin behaviour and how they led to modern human behaviour.
  - *Palaeo-environments and Palaeoclimates*: Earth systems change dynamically, and when stretched beyond certain thresholds, lead to changes (and potentially collapses) in ecosystems and biodiversity. This theme uncovers the variability in past ecosystems'

resilience to climate fluxes through space and time.

11. The themes are conceptually linked to serving the ambitions of four overarching key research questions that will inform decision-making:

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

### **Application Guidelines**

Fellowships are awarded for excellent, well-structured research projects that demonstrate the prudent use of funds. The application process is highly competitive and must adhere to all stipulated requirements. Applicants may only submit one application per granting cycle.

1. Please consider the following if you are thinking of applying for a GENUS NGP Postdoctoral Fellowship:
  - Is my research relevant to palaeoscience?
  - Does my application fit within the research themes of GENUS?
  - Am I affiliated with an academic, research or museum institution partnered with GENUS?
  - Am I fully compliant with all prior GENUS grants received?
2. An application is **automatically rejected** if:
  - Plagiarism
  - The application is missing information. All sections of the application must be complete.
  - There are deleted sections from the application.
  - The application does not adhere to stipulated word limits.
  - When pictures, tables, diagrams, or figures are added to the application.
  - There are missing documents that are required.
  - Documents are not in the requested format (i.e., PDF).
  - The application and required documentation are sent in separate emails. The application and required documents must be sent in one email.
  - Late applications.

### **Application Sections and Criteria**

The application sections and criteria are outlined below. Each section has a word limit and is scored from four to zero (with four representing excellent). The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications based on the strategic objectives of GENUS. Funding decisions are informed primarily by the accumulative scoring of two reviewers regarding each assessed application, per the below sections. Each section is weighted, indicating its strategic importance. Applications are ranked by overall scores and given to the review panel for final assessment. Applicants are advised to consider these outlined criteria when writing their application.

The final funding decisions are based on the scores and funding availability, subject to budget constraints. The decision of the panel review is final, and no negotiations will be considered.

## Required Documents

All applicants must provide the below documents in PDF to GENUS ([info.genus@wits.ac.za](mailto:info.genus@wits.ac.za)). No further changes or requests are considered once the application and required documents are emailed to us.



## Application Sections and Criteria for Scoring

Application Sections	Recommendations	Word limit	Weight	Score
Title of the research project	The title must be a short, concise title of the research project.	NA	NA	NA
A short abstract of the research project	The project abstract should be a summary of the overall research.	350	10%	4-0
Rationale and problem statement	<p>1. The rationale is a set of reasons for researching a particular subject. A problem statement is used in research that outlines the problem addressed by a study.</p> <p>2. The problem statement briefly addresses the question - what problem will the research address? The goal is to transform a generalised problem into a targeted, well-defined problem, one that is resolved through focused research and careful decision-making. A good research problem should have the following characteristics: it should address a knowledge gap, it should be a significant contribution to the existing body of research, it should lead to further study, and the problem should render itself to investigate through data collection.</p>	2000	20%	4-0
Proposed research aims, objectives, and methodology	<p>1. Description of the importance of the research project to your specific field. What is the relationship of your research to the research themes under GENUS?</p> <p>2. Include a concise statement of your research aims and objectives. Focus on what the research project is intended to achieve (long-term outcomes). Research objectives focus on how the aims will be achieved (short-term outcomes). Be realistic.</p> <p>3. Do you have the necessary resources to achieve the objective?</p> <p>4. State the material and location of material required to undertake this research. State your research methodology that describes the rationale of specific procedures or techniques used to identify, collect, select, and analyse information applied.</p>	3000	50%	4-0

Research plan	1. How do you plan to gather this information? Provide a detailed explanation of the information and work plan needed to answer the research aims. It should also include how data is managed and stored.	1000	10%	4-0
	2. Like other funding agencies and scientific journals, GENUS believes transparency, openness, and accountability are essential to the scientific process. We expect the results/data of projects funded through GENUS to be published promptly.			
	3. GENUS also aims to promote data sharing in an appropriate manner consistent with our grantees' needs, but with the recognition that different fields of study require different approaches to data sharing. It is recommended that each applicant provide a brief statement of how they intend to make the data resulting from their GENUS fellowship available to others and a timeline of when this will be available.			
Clearly outline your expected research outputs for the next two years	Expected academic outputs refer to the envisaged outcomes of the research project. Outputs may take the form of publications, presentations, and data sharing. Provide a list of expected research outputs, including authors, title, potential journal and expected month of submission.	1000	5%	4-0
Outline your planned science engagement activities	The overarching term science engagement includes all public engagement aspects with science that build a knowledge society. Science engagement may take the form of but is not limited to sharing digital information for education, public talks, information boards, creating exhibitions, participating in science competitions, etc. Provide a plan for your activities for the year. Indicate who your target audience is and when you expect to implement it.	1000	5%	4-0
References	Throughout the application, using author and date, you should cite only the most significant references relevant to your research (i.e., Nkosi 2021; Ndlovu et al. 2021). Provide a maximum of 25 references to support the research in the application. References should be listed in APA style: <a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/</a> .	NA	NA	NA
			100%	

### Review Process

All eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive review process. The assessment is based on the quality of the application and the financial and environmental feasibility.

All applications submitted to GENUS are screened for compliance stipulated in this Funding Guide and the requirements indicated in the application form. Applications that fail to meet the criteria outlined are automatically rejected.

The GENUS review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a two-tiered review process. Firstly, the application is sent to two reviewers to score. The reviewers are selected from local or international researchers with knowledge or insight into the relevant theme and research conducted. Secondly, the applications and review scores are reviewed by a Review Panel comprising the Executive Committee and co-opted individuals for a final decision.

## **Feedback**

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the funding recommendations have been approved, the applicants will be notified, in writing, of the outcome. A fellowship application is processed approximately three months from submission to the outcome letter.

## **Successful Applications**

GENUS does not award funds to individuals. The funds are given to your host institution and processed through your host Department / School. If your application is successful, the fellowship will not be released until the GENUS grants office has received copies of the following:

- A signed contract.
- A certified copy of your PhD certificate if not already submitted.
- An official letter from your host academic institution's Research Office.
- The successful applicant must submit an Annual Progress Report annually and must be submitted by no later than the 30 November each year. A satisfactory report comprises significant progress in the project, preferably in scientific publications. If nothing has been published, a strong motivation must be submitted to the Director of GENUS for the Director to assess if the Recipient should revise any further funding. Additional progress reports may be required to meet the funder's reporting requirements. The Recipient will be held fully liable for the grant amount if the Recipient does not provide GENUS a progress report by the stipulated deadline. GENUS reserves the right to request back the full Grant amount received by the Recipient if the minimum requirements are not met, i.e., one scientific publication.