



South African National Biodiversity Institute, Private Bag X101, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)12 843 5200 Fax: +27 (0)12 843 5219

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2010

Ref number:

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR SANBI-GRASSLANDS PROGRAMME SCHOLARSHIP FOR FULL-TIME MASTERS, DOCTORAL OR POST- DOCTORAL STUDIES AT SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN 2010

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) wishes to provide scholarships to South African students to pursue postgraduate studies identified by the Grasslands Programme and prioritised in the Grasslands research strategy at South African higher education institutions in 2010

1. OVERVIEW OF THE GRASSLANDS PROGRAMME

The Grasslands Programme is a twenty year initiative which aims to contribute to the following goal: *to secure the biodiversity and associated ecosystem services of the grasslands biome for the benefit of current and future generations*. Hosted by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Programme is a strategic partnership between the three spheres of government, the private sector, civil society and the academic sector. This has resulted in broad support with over 14 institutions committing in-kind co-finance and alignment of their programmes with the Grasslands Programme, with a GEF investment having been approved for the first five years. In addition, commitments to take on specific implementation responsibilities have been given by provincial agencies and the private sector. Key elements of the Programme have considerable potential for replicability through disseminating good management practices and lessons. In support of the broader goal of securing the biodiversity and ecosystem services of the grasslands biome, the Grasslands Programme has adopted a “mainstreaming” approach. The Programme will mainstream conservation objectives into

the major production sectors, namely: agriculture, forestry, urban development and coal mining. This will be achieved through interventions at three levels: macro level policy interventions, market level interventions and site level interventions in demonstration districts.

As the Grassland Programme embarks on the implementation of a 5 year mainstreaming strategy, the need for a clear research agenda in the programme was recognised. This was deemed critical to ensure that the research gaps hindering biodiversity management on the grasslands biome are prioritised and addressed, and similarly, that conservation implementation is informed by sound science. The Programme therefore established the Research Task Team and developed the grasslands research strategy in the early 2008. This Call for Proposal is therefore aimed at implementing some key research priorities identified in the grasslands strategy. The implementation of the research strategy is also aimed at building capacity in the field of grasslands science.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE GRASSLANDS RESEARCH STRATEGY

The grasslands research strategy was developed in 2008 by a team of volunteered experts with interest in the field of biodiversity and the grassland science. The Grasslands research strategy was approved in November 2008 as the final document to guide future biodiversity research in the Grassland biome. The research strategy was made available to relevant research institutions, academic institutions and government research stations for implementation purposes. The aim of the grassland research strategy is to improve the coordination, prioritisation and integration of research on grasslands biodiversity conservation. The strategy aims to ensure that the Grassland Programme is empowered with the sound scientific information at the correct level of spatial resolution and accuracy to ensure that the grasslands programme is able to achieve its vision, mission and objectives. Similarly, the strategy highlights gaps in research that hinder the implementation of biodiversity management on the grasslands biome. It is also recognised that grasslands research and management should not happen in isolation of the national environmental agenda. In this regard the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) and the National Biodiversity Framework (NBF) are used to ensure that grassland research priorities are informed and guided by national biodiversity priorities.

The research strategy is divided into four main themes or research areas:

- **Pressures, threats and adaptations:** Quantifying and understanding the nature of the drivers and pressures to which the grasslands are being subjected is a key research focus.
- **Quantifying and monitoring:** Understanding what we have in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and monitor how this changes over time.
- **Predictive understanding of ecosystem response to change:** Develop a predictive understanding on how individual species, assemblages of species and the

entire landscape will respond to the pressures and drivers that it is being subjected to.

- **Supporting conservation actions:** Ensure that research supports conservation actions that attempt to address pressures on the grasslands, by providing knowledge and information that can fill gaps in their conservation actions and plans.

3. GRASSLANDS PROGRAMME SCHOLARSHIP

The Grasslands Programme has made funds available to suitable South African students to study post-graduate degree at South African higher education institution in 2010. The available funds are part of the approach to the implementation of the Grasslands research strategy and for students to address existing research gaps identified in the Programme. The funds will be managed by SANBI and will be awarded on a competitive basis to students studying towards obtaining a:

- Master's degree in South Africa
- Doctoral degree in South Africa
- Post-Doctoral degree in South Africa

The funds will be available to students interested in pursuing the type of research specified below.

4. FIELDS OF STUDY SUPPORTED

The Postgraduate Bursaries will support priority research areas identified in the Grasslands Research Strategy (copy available on www.grasslands.org.za). Research projects must demonstrate linkages with topics identified in the research strategy under the following key themes:

- Research on pressures, threats and adaptation of the grasslands
- Quantifying and monitoring biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Predictive understanding of ecosystem response to change
- Supporting conservation actions and plans by Conservation authorities

Preference will be given to research projects that support the implementation of the UNDP-GEF-funded programme of mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into major production sectors operating on the grasslands biome, namely, agriculture, urban, forestry and coal mining.

5. VALUES OF SCHOLARSHIPS

The scholarship is limited to the cost of field work surveys, tuition fees, laboratory data analysis, and transport to study sites. The money is not intended to contribute towards the cost of university accommodation, purchasing of computers/laptop and meals but may cover fieldwork related expenses. Depending on the merit of the request for funds, the value of each research will be determined by the research methodologies proposed and funding request of up to R100 000.00 may be approved.

6. PERIOD OF STUDY

The bursary will be available for the following prescribed period of study provided the bursar demonstrates satisfactory scientific understanding of the research area chosen:

- MSc degree – 2 years
- PhD degree – 3 years
- Post-Doctorate degree – 2 years

7. ELIGIBILITY

The application for scholarship is open to South African citizens or permanent residents who are registered full-time or intend to register full-time for postgraduate degree during 2010 at any university which has the resources to support the intended field of research. The scholarships also support students intending to register Post-Doc degree.

Below are the specific eligibility criteria for application of the scholarship:

- The postgraduate degree by course work or whereby research work constitute 50% will not be supported
- The scholarship is available to students pursuing research-based degree
- Candidates who are salaried employees will be eligible to apply if their primary work will be the implementation of this research and had to register with higher education institution
- Applicants intending to upgrade their Masters degree to Doctoral degree will be eligible
- Applicants must have obtained at least previous degrees within a minimum prescribed period
- Preference will be given to students with extensive knowledge of the preferred field and who have good academic track records.

8. SUPPLEMENTATION

Holders of the Grasslands Programme scholarship are allowed to hold non-binding supplementary bursaries/scholarship, grants to an unlimited amount. Holders of this

scholarship may be salaried employees from any research institution whose primary work will be the implementation of this specified field of research and had to register with higher education institution.

9. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The call for proposals will remain open until all bursaries have been awarded.

Applicants are advised to submit the following documents for scholarship considerations:

- Applicants must submit their *curriculum vitae*, including a full academic record and the names and contact details of two referees.
- The applicants must submit the name of at least one recent supervisor, if applicable.
- Applicants must submit a brief proposal indicating their statement of research interests. Proposals should at least include the following headings:
 - An introduction outlining the project
 - Key research questions
 - Research methodologies
 - Budget breakdown
 - Period of study
- Successful applicants will be informed of the outcome of their applications by letter thereafter.
- Applications for these 2010 scholarships can be e-mailed to m.tau@sanbi.org.za or post to Mahlodi Tau, Grasslands Programme, Private Bag X101, PRETORIA, 0001

10. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Holders of the scholarships will from time to time report progress to the Research Task Team and any changes to the execution of the research must be approved by the student supervisor in consultation with the Research Task Team.
- If successful candidates want to change the course of study or change institution after awarding scholarship, they should consult with the Research Task Team for approval.
- The Task Team will decide on the allocation of funds for each research and funds will be made available yearly.
- Funding support for further years will depend on the progress made by the students and the Research Task Team is vested with power to approve further funding.
- Students who do not obtain the degree, for which the scholarship was awarded, relinquish the studies or leave the university during the period for which the scholarship was awarded, will have to refund all payments of the scholarship already received.

11. SELECTION CRITERIA AND EVALUATION

The selection panel will comprise of the Research Task Team and relevant members of the Grasslands Programme coordinating unit. The decision of the selection panel will be final on selecting successful candidate. The panel will select successful candidate based on potential and academic excellence. Applicants must have obtained at least an average of 60% from their Honours degree if applying for Masters Scholarship. The section criteria will be based among other things on proposal merit, referee report, research ability, and knowledge of the research field and the likelihood of the student to complete the degree. The merit of the proposal will be evaluated based on the aims and research hypothesis, methodologies and feasibilities, research timeline and deliverables/outputs from the research. The successful candidate will be selected by the panel based on the available evidence of academic excellence and recommendations from referees. The selection of candidates will be executed in merit order.

12. ENQUIRIES

Please contact Mahlodi Tau at telephone number (012) 843 5000 or e-mail m.tau@sanbi.org.za

13. REFERENCE

SANBI, 2008. *A Research Strategy for the Grasslands Biome*, Report prepared by the Grasslands Research Task Team for the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme, Pretoria.