

# **SARChI Research Chair in Astronomy (Southern African Large Telescope – SALT)**

Opening Date:  
Thursday, 11 February, 2016

Closing Date:  
Monday, 1 May, 2017

## Short description

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa have approved funding for the awarding of a Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) Research Chair under the SARChI funding instrument.

The South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) was established in 2006 as a strategic intervention of the South African Government to reverse brain drain in the public academic and research sector and to develop local expertise. In particular, the Initiative is aimed at increasing scientific research capacity through the development of human capacity and by stimulating the generation of new knowledge.

SALT the flagship optical astronomy facility in South Africa, is a 10-m class telescope and the largest single telescope in the Southern Hemisphere. It has been in scientific operation since 2011, producing internationally competitive science.

For more information on the call including detailed description, guidelines and application form, and contact persons please visit:

<http://www.nrf.ac.za/division/funding/sarchi-research-chair-astronomy-southern-african-large-telescope-%E2%80%93-salt>

## **THE SALT RESEARCH CHAIR**

To strengthen South Africa's research program in SALT, and to ensure that the usage of the facility is aligned to the National Strategy for Multiwavelength Astronomy, an outstanding research scientist is required to occupy the SALT Research Chair. With 80 per cent of the individual's time devoted to research, support for post-doctoral fellows and students, and the requirement to supervise an average of 10 post-graduate students each year, the SALT Research Chair is expected to form the core of a scientific team to exploit SALT within a multiwavelength approach meshing the SALT Chair's research proposal with the interests of

one or more of the already established research groups within the country, especially at the hosting institutions.

It is anticipated that the SALT Research Chair will be co-hosted with the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) which is responsible for the management of the operations of SALT. The Research Chair will be expected to divide time between the two hosting institutions.

SAAO offers a research environment in which:

- It is the national facility for optical and infrared astronomy in South Africa;
- It conducts a vibrant research program of its own;
- Staff co-supervise post-graduate students in collaboration with other universities;
- It operates SALT under contract from the SALT Foundation;
- It operates other optical astronomical facilities at its observing station near Sutherland in the Karoo; and
- It has extensive engineering and technical capabilities, including electronic and mechanical workshops, and an optical laboratory.

The SALT Research Chair will be awarded in an open and competitive process. The application must include, (i) *the motivation by the South African public university to co-host the Research Chair with SAAO;* (ii) *the extensive CV of an approved candidate for appointment to the Research Chair position;* and (iii) *a research and activity plan drafted by the nominated candidate.*

Each university will be permitted to approve up to a maximum of three candidates, who must submit a separate full proposal. The application must be authored by the nominated candidate in consultation with the university's Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for research. The Standing Astronomy Grants Panel will assess applications and the Panel will recommend an award for approval by the NRF.

This assessment will focus on the motivation by the university to host the Research Chair, the nomination of the candidate for appointment to the Research Chair position, and a research and activity plan. The application should thus give details on:

1. The readiness and commitment of the institution to provide an enabling environment to ensure the success of the Research Chair;
2. Strengths, capabilities, strategic environment and competencies of the hosting university;
3. The alignment of the proposed Research Chair with the proposed thematic areas and the university research strategy;
4. The potential of the proposed Research Chair to enhance the international research and/or innovation competitiveness within the discipline;
5. The potential of the Research Chair to impact on social and/or economic development of the country;
6. The research focus of the Research Chair;
7. A proposed plan on how the Research Chair will fulfil SARChI objectives, including the strategic considerations mentioned in the university proposal and how it will deliver on the university research strategy;
8. Specific objectives, outputs and outcomes for the five-year period; and
9. How the university will collaborate with SAAO.

More information on selection criteria is given in the enclosed SARChI Framework and Guide for Applications dated February 2017. The applicants must register and complete their full updated *curriculum vitae* (CV) on the NRF Online Submission System (<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/nrfmkii/>) as it constitutes part of the application. In

principle the applicant must have been approved to apply for the Research Chair, by the university.

As the award of the SALT Research Chair will be made to the host university, the application for the SALT Research Chair must be submitted by the applicant to the university's Designated Authority (DA) for endorsement. The submission must be made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research at the university and supported by the Managing Director of SAAO. Each university must submit the following documentation:

- University Research Strategy;
- Programme and Qualification Mix approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training;
- Letter of support from the Managing Director of SAAO;
- Details of current academic and research staff, in the specific discipline; and
- Statistics on research outputs and postgraduate students trained and graduated for the period 2012 to 2016, in the specific discipline.

**Each university may submit a maximum of three applications for this Research Chair.**

Applications should be submitted not later than 1 May 2017, on the NRF Online Submission System (<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/nrfmkii/>), by the DVC responsible for Research and validated by the relevant Designated Authority (DA). Only submissions that provide all the requested information will be eligible and considered for review.

No commitment should be given to the candidate(s) before the NRF has officially informed the University of the Award by means of an award letter.

**Research Chair Call activities and timelines**

(Application to host the Research Chair by the university and Awarding of the Research Chair and approval of the nominated candidate and full proposal)

- Communication to the University Deputy Vice-Chancellor/ Director of Research: 3 March 2017
- Call opens for application: 3 March 2017
- Call closes for applications: 1 May 2017
- Panel review meetings: 8 June 2017
- Review outcome letter sent to Deputy Vice-Chancellors: 30 June 2017
- Feedback letter sent to Deputy Vice-Chancellors: 7 July 2017

**NRF contact persons**

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