



South African Radio Astronomy Observatory

Application Guide for SARAO Freestanding Master's Scholarships for 2027

READ THE ENTIRE GUIDE BEFORE APPLYING FOR A SARAO FREESTANDING MASTER'S SCHOLARSHIP

1. Eligibility for SARAO Freestanding Master's Scholarships for the 2027 Academic Year

1.1. Eligibility: Nationality

SARAO will consider applications from:

- South African citizens and permanent residents.
- Citizens of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia.

1.2. Eligibility: Undergraduate / Honours Degree

SARAO will consider applications from:

- Students who completed or graduated with a BSc Honours degree in Physics and Astronomy/Astrophysics or Computer Science and Mathematics, since 2025; or
- Students currently pursuing a BSc Honours degree in Physics and Astronomy/Astrophysics or Computer Science and Mathematics; or
- Students who completed or graduated with a four-year BEng degree in Electronic Engineering, Mechatronic Engineering or Computer Engineering, since 2025; or
- Students currently pursuing a four-year BEng degree in Electronic Engineering, Mechatronic Engineering or Computer Engineering.

1.3. Eligibility: Minimum Academic Requirements

SARAO will only consider applications from:

- Students who achieved a minimum average of 65% for their BSc Honours degree in Physics and Astronomy/Astrophysics or Computer Science and Mathematics; or
- Students who achieved a minimum average of 65% for the final year of their BEng degree in Electronic Engineering, Mechatronic Engineering or Computer Engineering.

Note:

- (i) For students currently studying towards a relevant BSc Honours or BEng degree, applications will be evaluated based on their most recent university results. Only those with a minimum average of 65% in their latest results will be considered for a scholarship.
- (ii) If a student currently enrolled in a relevant BSc Honours or BEng degree is offered a SARAQ Master's scholarship based on their current results, but fails to achieve a minimum of 65% upon completion of their degree, the scholarship offer will be revoked.

2. Projects for Master's Research for the 2027 Academic Year – For Freestanding Master's Scholarships

- 2.1. SARAQ will ONLY consider applications from students who have selected a research project that has been approved by SARAQ for Master's research in 2027, and who upload a signed letter from the relevant supervisor stating that he/she will supervise the student.
- 2.2. All projects approved by SARAQ for postgraduate research for 2027, as well as the contact details of the relevant supervisors, are available at: <https://www.saraq.ac.za/researchandstudy/masters-scholarships/>
- 2.3. Prior to submitting an application for a SARAQ freestanding Master's scholarship, you must review the list of approved Master's research projects for 2027, and identify a project you wish to pursue for your Master's degree.
- 2.4. Once you have identified a project, you must then contact the supervisor of the project to discuss the project, and determine if you have the required qualifications, skills and abilities to undertake the project.
- 2.5. If the supervisor of the approved project agrees to supervise you for your Master's degree, the supervisor must provide you with a signed letter, on a university letterhead, stating that he/she has agreed to supervise you for the relevant project. You MUST upload a copy of this letter with your application, as an attachment. [SARAQ will NOT consider an application if there is no supervision-agreement letter – See Section 3.](#)
- 2.6. You must use the details of the research project, as provided on the SARAQ website, to complete the "Research Project Information Section" of the application form.
- 2.7. If you are awarded a SARAQ freestanding Master's scholarship, you will have to register at the university where the supervisor of the research project is based, and undertake your degree at that university.

Note: Supervisors are under no obligation to agree to supervise a student

3. !!Supporting Documents to be Attached to your Application Form!!

You MUST upload **ALL FIVE** documents listed below, in the **Attachments Section** of the application form.

IF ANY OF THESE DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ATTACHED, SARAQ WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION!!!!

Document	Details
1. Identity Document or Passport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For South African citizens and permanent residents: A copy of your South African ID - For non-South Africans: A copy of your passport
2. University Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All your university academic results, from the start of your university career, up to and including your latest results. - Please attached all your results as ONE single PDF Document
3. An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae	
4. Supervisor-agreement letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The supervisor of the project you have selected must provide you with a signed letter, on a university letterhead, stating that he/she has agreed to supervise you for the relevant project. - The letter of agreement from the relevant supervisor is essential. - If no letter is attached to your application, your application will be REJECTED.
5. Letter of Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The motivation is CRITICAL to the review of your application. Take time to draft an excellent and authentic motivation! - If you submit an AI generated letter, your application will be REJECTED. - You must provide a letter of about 1000 words motivating why you should be awarded a SARAQ Master's Scholarship. In this letter you should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your academic progress from undergraduate to postgraduate level. - Your understanding of radio astronomy generally, and more specifically of the MeerKAT and SKA radio telescopes. - Why you wish to study the degree you have selected, and how this degree will help you progress towards your ideal career. - How the research proposed for your Master's degree links to the science or engineering of the MeerKAT radio telescope and/or the SKA radio telescope. - Details of academic, and other achievements. - Your personal strengths, passions and career aspirations.

4. !! Letters of Reference!!

Your application must be supported by **AT LEAST TWO** letters of reference. The letters of reference must be **from university academic/research staff**, and must be submitted to study.research@sarao.ac.za before 15 July 2026. Please ask the referees to consider the following questions when drafting their letters:

- How would you rate the student's undergraduate / honours performance relative to their peers? (e.g. top half of the class / top 25% / top 10% etc.)?
- How would you rate the student's fourth year/honours/other research project? (If a student has not as yet started their research project, how would you rate their potential for research?)
- How would you rate the student's work ethic / dedication to their studies?
- How would you rate the student's ability to work independently?
- To what extent do you think the student's undergraduate / honours training has prepared them for the proposed Master's degree topic?
- How would you rate the student's experience or competency in performing research tasks as required of a Master's degree in their proposed field?
- Has the candidate been involved in any activities related to radio astronomy outside of their studies? (e.g. DARA, VLBI school, etc.)

5. How to apply for a SARAO Freestanding Master's Scholarship for the 2027 Academic Year

5.1. Application forms are accessible online at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>

5.2. **Select the "SARAO Master's" option.**

5.3. Students may only submit ONE application.

5.4. Students **MUST** upload all five required documents (see Section 3), in the Attachments Section of the application form. **IF ANY OF THESE DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ATTACHED TO YOUR APPLICATION, SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION.**

5.5. Your application must be supported by at least two letters of reference (see Section 4). **IF YOUR APPLICATION IS NOT SUPPORTED BY TWO LETTERS OF REFERENCE SARAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE YOUR REFEREES HAVE SUBMITTED LETTERS OF REFERENCE.**

5.6. Once you submit your application, it will automatically be routed to the institution where you are applying to study. **In order for your application to be considered for 2027 funding, you must submit your application on or before the cut-off date. It is YOUR responsibility to check the application closing date with the university's Research or Postgraduate office.**

6. Structure and Funding Levels for SARAO Freestanding Master's Scholarships for the 2027 Academic Year

	Value
I. Scholarship	R200,000
II. International Student Fee	Paid in full
III. Travel Grant	R40,000
IV. Equipment Grant	R25,000
V. Home Travel Grant	Cost of one return ticket, with one change permitted, per year
VI. Repatriation Fee	Paid in full, if required
VII. Emergency Medical Insurance	Paid in full
VIII. Assistive Technology Device	R20,000

- I. Maximum duration of a SARAO Freestanding Master's Scholarship is two years.
- II. SARAO will pay the international student fee due to the university, for students from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia.
- III. Travel grants are awarded annually, for the duration of the scholarship. The student must use the travel grant for travel related to his/her research.
- IV. The equipment grant is a total amount available for the full duration of the scholarship (i.e. this is not an annual amount). The equipment grant is available to the student to support the purchase of equipment required for his/her research.
- V. SARAO will organise and pay for one return ticket, per year, for students from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia, to travel to South Africa.
- VI. SARAO will pay the repatriation fee, if required, for students from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia.
- VII. SARAO will pay the cost of emergency medical insurance for students from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia.
- VIII. Students living with a disability may apply for a grant of up to R20 000. This is the maximum amount allowed during the tenure of the scholarship. An assistive device is defined as any device, product, equipment or tool that is designed or adapted to enable persons with disabilities to participate in activities, tasks or actions including: (i) mobility aids such as wheelchairs, prostheses and crutches as well as service animals (ii) communication aids such as hearing aids, Frequency Modulation (FM) systems; (iii) sensory aids such as white canes; noise reducing headphones and coloured lenses (iv) technology aids such as computers for alternate and augmentative communication, screen readers, magnifiers, texts in audio format (Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the PSET, 2022).

7. Enquiries regarding SARAO Freestanding Master's Scholarship Applications

Contact: study.research@sarao.ac.za