

HEALTHY FUTURES SOUTH AFRICA PHD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

BACKGROUND

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has partnered with the Mastercard Foundation through the Africa Health Collaborative to advance equitable access to quality higher education and to strengthen Africa's health workforce and research leadership pipeline. This partnership seeks to support talented young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to access postgraduate education and to develop the skills, knowledge, and leadership capacity required to transform health systems across Africa.

Within this partnership, Healthy Futures South Africa (HFSA), implemented through the Department of Family, Community and Emergency Care at UCT, plays a central role in strengthening doctoral training, research capacity development, and innovation in priority health areas. The programme focuses on building a new generation of African health researchers and leaders whose work is grounded in community needs and responsive to the realities of health systems in low-resource and underserved settings.

The HFSA PhD Fellowship Programme has been established as a strategic investment to support doctoral researchers whose work aligns with Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC), health systems strengthening, and youth employment in the health sector. The programme prioritises research that is policy-relevant, community-engaged, and capable of generating practical solutions to improve health outcomes and reduce inequities.

The University of Cape Town hereby invites applications for a limited number of PhD Fellowships for candidates registered or eligible for registration for doctoral studies at UCT. Fellowships will be awarded based on academic merit, research potential, leadership ability, financial need, and alignment with HFSA priority themes.

A key expectation of the programme is that awardees will contribute to strengthening health systems and improving health outcomes in their countries and communities through high-quality research, leadership, and knowledge translation that advances equity, social justice, and sustainable health system transformation in Africa.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

To apply for the HFSA PhD Fellowship Programme, applicants should first apply to the University of Cape Town for academic study and placement. The below information provides guidance on submitting both their academic application to UCT and their HFSA Fellowship application. Candidates are encouraged to contact the relevant academic department prior to submission of their application.

PART ONE: UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC APPLICATION

Applicants should apply directly to UCT for academic study before submitting an HFSA Fellowship application as the HFSA PhD Fellowship Programme does not manage or process academic applications. For more information on processes to apply for doctoral studies for UCT, please visit the below links:

- [UCT Application Process](#)
- [2026 Directions for Postgraduate Applications](#)

For more guidance on doctoral applications for each department, please visit the below links:

- [Department of Family, Community and Emergency Care](#)
- [School of Public Health](#)
- [Health and Rehabilitation Sciences](#)
- [Health Economics Unit](#)
- [Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#)

Applications from other departments may be considered if the PhD topic aligns with the HFSA priority themes.

Submit and track your application via the official UCT postgraduate online application system found here: [UCT Apply online](#)

Applicants requiring accommodation should follow UCT Student Housing procedures as part of the academic application process found here: [UCT Housing Online](#)

For guidance and support for international applicants, visit the [International Academic Programmes Office \(IAPO\)](#).

PART TWO: HFSA FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

Once you have submitted your UCT application, the next step is to complete and submit your HFSA PhD Fellowship application.

Step 1: Complete the HFSA Fellowship Application Form

Complete all sections of the official HFSA PhD Fellowship Application Form, making sure that:

- All supporting documentation is included.
- The research proposal aligns with HFSA priority themes.
- Proof of UCT application is attached.

Step 2: Prepare Fellowship Application Supporting Documents

The following supporting documents should be submitted as a single PDF together with your application form:

- Certified copy of ID or passport
- Academic transcripts and qualifications
- Curriculum Vitae (maximum 3 pages)
- Research proposal (maximum 5 pages)
- Proof of UCT application or registration
- Supervisor confirmation or support letter (if available)
- Two academic referee reports (submitted directly by referees)
- Proof of funding (if applicable)
- Proof of address (not older than 3 months)

Step 3: Submit Your Application

Submit your completed application electronically:

- Email: FACE.Research@uct.ac.za
- Subject line: HFSA PhD Application

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 31 OCTOBER 2026

The Fellowship application should reach us no later than 31 October 2026. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

We wish all applicants every success — let the leadership opportunity begin.