

HEALTHY FUTURES SOUTH AFRICA PHD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Terms of Reference and Conditions of Award

1. Introduction

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. Along with financial support, the Fellowships offers leadership development and service opportunities, formal mentorship beyond the academic supervisor and membership of an HFSA Fellows Network.

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 Fellows 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.

2. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements to be considered for the HFSA PhD Fellowship:

2.1. Target Group

Applicants should:

- Be a South African citizen or an alumnus/alumna of an Africa Health Collaborative (AHC) partner university.
- Be registered, or eligible for registration, for a PhD programme at the University of Cape Town (UCT).
- Commit to full-time or structured part-time doctoral study for the duration of the four-year Fellowship.
- May undertake part-time work (not exceeding 20 hours/week) alongside the Fellowship.

Advantageous:

- Women and youth under the age of 35.

2.2. Strategic Objectives and Priority Themes

Applicants should propose research aligned with one or more of HFSA's strategic focus areas, including:

- Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC)
- Health Systems Strengthening
- Youth Empowerment in Health
- Public Health and Health Policy
- Health Innovation and Health Entrepreneurship
- Health Economics
- Mental Health and Addiction Care
- Emergency and Family Medicine
- Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
- Community Engagement and Health Promotion

3. Academic Requirements

Applicants should demonstrate strong academic capability and research potential. Specifically, applicants must:

- Have applied for admission to a PhD programme at UCT.
- Preferably have received a conditional or firm offer of admission from UCT at the time of Fellowship selection.
- Demonstrate strong academic performance, including prior academic achievement and research potential.
- Propose a research topic aligned with HFSA's strategic objectives and priority themes (outlined in Section 2).
- Provide academic references and evidence of supervisor support as part of the assessment process.

Successful applicants may be required to submit original academic transcripts and certified copies

of qualifications. Applicants whose academic documents are not in English may be required to provide certified translations.

4. Selection Criteria and Preference Considerations

Eligible applications will be assessed holistically based on the following criteria:

4.1. Core Assessment Criteria

Preference will be given to applicants who demonstrate:

- Academic excellence and strong research potential
- Leadership potential
- Commitment to community engagement
- Research with the potential to influence policy, practice, and health systems strengthening
- Implementation-focused or community-engaged research

4.2. Equity and Financial Need Considerations

In line with HFSA's commitment to equity and inclusive access to doctoral education, preference will also be given to applicants who:

- Demonstrate financial need
- Are women and/or youth
- Are persons living with disabilities
- Come from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds

Applicants may be required to provide documentary evidence supporting information provided in the application. HFSA reserves the right to disqualify any application where false or misleading information has been provided.

5. Value of the Fellowship

Subject to approved budgets, the Fellowship may provide support for:

- Tuition fees and international student fees.
- Accommodation support.
- Living allowance.
- Student medical cover.
- Immigration and visa-related costs.
- Once-off laptop and equipment support.
- Research costs, including fieldwork and dissemination.
- Short courses, research methodology, and leadership development training.
- Conference and research travel support.
- Economy class travel for eligible Fellows residing outside Cape Town.

All benefits are subject to applicable University and Programme policies and approved budgets.

6. Tenure of the Fellowship

The Fellowship is intended to support doctoral studies for up to four years, subject to:

- Satisfactory academic progress.
- Compliance with UCT and HFSA reporting requirements.
- Availability of funds.
- Continued registration at the University of Cape Town.

Continuation of funding is not automatic and will be reviewed annually.

7. Conditions of Award

Successful Fellows will be expected to:

- Maintain satisfactory academic progress.
- Submit biannual progress reports endorsed by their supervisors.
- Participate in HFSA workshops, seminars, site visits, and programme activities.
- Contribute to mentorship and peer-learning opportunities where required.
- Present research findings at HFSA events or partner institutions.
- Produce policy-relevant outputs and a final policy brief.
- Acknowledge HFSA, the Africa Health Collaborative, and the Mastercard Foundation in all publications and presentations arising from Fellowship-supported research.
- Adhere to University regulations and ethical standards.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in suspension or withdrawal of funding.

The University of Cape Town reserves the right to cancel incomplete and/or late applications, to effect changes to the conditions of the Fellowship or to make no awards at all.