



# South African Radio Astronomy Observatory

## Application Guide for SARAO Freestanding Honours Scholarships for 2026

### READ THE ENTIRE GUIDE BEFORE APPLYING FOR A SARAO FREESTANDING HONOURS SCHOLARSHIP

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#### **1. Eligibility for SARAO Freestanding Honours Scholarships for the 2026 Academic Year**

##### **1.1. Eligibility: Nationality**

SARAO will consider applications from South African citizens and permanent residents, as well as from citizens of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia.

##### **1.2. Eligibility: Undergraduate Degree**

SARAO will consider applications from:

1.2.1 Students who completed a BSc degree in 2024, in either:

- Advanced Physics; or
- Astronomy/Astrophysics; or
- Computer Science with Mathematics/Applied Mathematics

**AND who have completed Physics and Mathematics/Applied Mathematics up to at least second year level**

##### **OR**

1.2.2 Students who are currently (in 2025) in third year of a BSc degree in either:

- Advanced Physics; or
- Astronomy/Astrophysics; or
- Computer Science with Mathematics/Applied Mathematics

**AND who have completed Physics and Mathematics/Applied Mathematics up to at least second year level.**

##### **1.3. Eligibility: Honours Degree**

SARAO will consider applications from students who wish to study towards a BSc Honours degree in Astronomy/Astrophysics, or Computer Science with Mathematics/Applied Mathematics, at a South African University.

## **2. How to apply for a SRAO Freestanding Honours Scholarship for the 2026 Academic Year**

- 2.1. Application forms are accessible online at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>
- 2.2. Complete the Profile section first
- 2.3. From MY APPLICATIONS, select NRF Postgraduate Scholarships, then select SRAO Honours Scholarship
- 2.4. Students may only submit ONE application.
- 2.5. Students MUST upload all FOUR required documents (see Section 3), in the Attachments Section of the application form. **IF ANY OF THESE FOUR DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ATTACHED TO YOUR APPLICATION, SRAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION.**
- 2.6. 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 SRAO WILL NOT CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION**
- 2.7. Once you submit your application, it will automatically be routed to the institution where you are applying to study.
- 2.8. In order for your application to be considered for 2026 funding, you must submit your application on or before the cut-off date. It is YOUR responsibility to find out the application closing date with the university's research or postgraduate office.

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

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

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

Document	Details
<b>1. Identity Document or Passport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- For South African citizens and permanent residents: A copy of your South African ID</li><li>- For non-South Africans: A copy of your passport</li></ul>
<b>2. University Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- All your university academic results, from the start of your studies until now, and where relevant for all other degrees completed to date.</li><li>- <b>Please attached all your results per degree/qualification as ONE PDF Document</b></li></ul>
<b>3. An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae</b>	
<b>4. Letter of Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The letter of motivation is CRITICAL for the review of your application. Take the time to draft an excellent motivation!</li><li>- You must provide a letter of about 1000 words motivating why you should be awarded a SRAO Honours Scholarship. In this letter you should include the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Your academic progress at undergraduate level.</li><li>- Your understanding of radio astronomy generally, and more specifically of the MeerKAT and SKA radio telescopes.</li><li>- Why you wish to study the degree you have selected, and how this degree will help you progress towards your ideal career.</li><li>- Details of academic, and other achievements.</li><li>- Your personal strengths, passions and career aspirations.</li></ul></li></ul>

#### **4. !! Letters of Reference!!**

Your application must be supported by **AT LEAST TWO** letters of reference. Please ask at least two academic/faculty staff to submit letters of reference to [study.research@sarao.ac.za](mailto:study.research@sarao.ac.za), before 31 August 2025. Please ask the referees to include the following information in their letter of reference:

- The capacity in which the referee knows the applicant, and for how long they have known the applicant.
- The applicant's academic performance, and attitude to their studies.
- The applicant's written and verbal communications skills.
- Any other relevant comments regarding applicant.

#### **5. Funding Levels and Period of Support for SARAO Freestanding Honours Scholarships**

- 5.1. The 2026 SARAO honours scholarship level is R181,058.
- 5.2. Students are also eligible for a once-off laptop grant of R13,000.
- 5.3. The duration of a SARAO honours scholarship is one year. However, SARAO will provide two years of funding to students who are accepted for the NASSP Extended Honours in Astronomy course.

#### **6. Enquiries regarding SARAO Freestanding Honours Scholarships**

Contact: [study.research@sarao.ac.za](mailto:study.research@sarao.ac.za)