

# **Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) PhD Position - University of the Free State (UFS)**

## **Chair: Innovative Agro-processing for Climate Smart Food Systems**

**Call for Applications: PhD Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) 2026-2028**

### **1. Background**

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) in partnership with Mastercard Foundation, Gulu University (Uganda), Egerton University (Kenya), Africa University (Zimbabwe), University of the Free State (South Africa), Malawi University of Science and Technology (Malawi), University of Eldoret (Kenya), Uganda Martyrs University (Uganda), University of Port Harcourt (Nigeria), University of Cape Coast (Ghana), University of Bamenda (Cameroon), National University of Agriculture (Benin), and Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique (Morocco) are implementing a 10-year programme (2023-2033) called Transforming African Agricultural Universities to Meaningfully Contribute to Africa's Growth and Development (TAGDev 2.0). The programme seeks to strengthen universities and TVET institutions to better serve communities by skilling and empowering Africa's young people and their institutions to drive inclusive, equitable and climate-resilient transformation of agriculture and agrifood systems. The TAGDev 2.0 programme will support young African students who are economically disadvantaged but academically competent in accessing university education. The scholarship is open to both female and male applicants. However, females, refugees, internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities are highly encouraged to apply.

### **2. Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA)**

The Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) Programme contributes to one of RUFORUM's three strategic goals to "build synergy from networks of specialisation to develop quality human resources and capacity required to intensify and increase Africa's agricultural productivity and competitiveness" and its Vision 2030 Strategy that focuses on building postgraduate training and research capacity in its member universities. The GTA programme has been implemented since 2015 to: (i) improve the quality of higher education and increase the pool of PhD-level trained academic staff in African universities; (ii) provide opportunities for doctoral research to contribute more directly to African development; (iii) strengthen inter-university collaboration in the field of higher education in Africa; and (iv) promote staff mobility among RUFORUM member universities, and across Africa.

Under the GTA arrangement:

1. The sending universities nominate the staff to be trained, and RUFORUM Secretariat helps to get them placed in receiving (host) Universities.
2. The sending universities commit to paying for travel, health insurance, upkeep and research of their staff under training.
3. The receiving/host universities waive the fees and associated costs and provide accommodation for the admitted GTA Fellows.
4. Once the admission process is completed, the sending and host universities and the nominated GTA Fellow sign a Tripartite Agreement to guide the hosting and training of the Fellow.
5. In some cases where opportunities exist, the host University may attach the GTA Fellow to the research program at the hosting university.
6. The RUFORUM Secretariat facilitates the GTA arrangement and follows up on the GTA training.

### 3. Eligible Program

This call for a three-year scholarship for the 2026-2028 academic year is open to applicants interested in and eligible to study a PhD at the University of the Free State, South Africa. The theme of the research chair is “Innovative Agro-processing for Climate-Smart Food Systems” with particular interest in the effect of processing on neglected and underutilized crop species.

**Program Name:** There is an option of three specialisations as Doctor of Philosophy available at the Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development:

- Food and Nutrition Security OR
- Consumer Science OR
- Food Science.

### Research Background/Theme:

**Innovative agro-processing technologies could transform the food systems and increase food security. However, it depends on the consumer's willingness to adopt and embrace the new products and crops. Innovations in product development must be consumer-led and market-orientated to truly impact and transform communities in the face of climate change.**

The Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, in collaboration with RUFORUM, is pleased to announce a call for applications for the GTA Program. The

program invites applications for a Doctoral Fellowship (PhD). This fellowship provides an excellent opportunity for early-career researchers to advance their expertise and contribute to cutting-edge research aimed at revolutionising food systems through interdisciplinary research, leveraging cutting-edge technologies, and fostering innovative processing and product development strategies.

The successful applicant will be expected to live in Bloemfontein when not conducting fieldwork. They will undertake independent and collaborative research aligned with the Research Chair's objectives, publish high-quality research in accredited journals, and contribute to lecturing in the department, as well as supervise and mentor of postgraduate students.

**General Admission Requirements to the University of the Free State for the above program:**

1. Hold a relevant Master's degree awarded in the last four years in Food Science, Consumer Science, Food Technology, Human Nutrition, Public Health Nutrition or a closely related field.
2. Have a good background in all or some of the following:
  - Product Development
  - Sensory Evaluation Techniques
  - Nutrients/functional properties/food dispersion analysis
  - Consumer-led research
  - Community engagement
  - Food Microbiology and shelf-life studies
3. Have a strong publication record in accredited journals, with two publications.
4. Relevant teaching experience.
5. Be able to conduct independent research.
6. Be under the age of 40.

**Additional Requirements Specific to this Position:** Windows platforms: MS Word, MS Excel, MS Outlook, MS PowerPoint/Relevant statistical and data collection software.

**Application Process:**

1. Applicants must be nominated by their sending University, a RUFORUM member University.
2. Interested candidates should submit the following documents to Dr Alba du Toit (dutoita1@ufs.ac.za) and Ms Selma Nghituwamhata (s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org) with

the subject line: ***Application for Graduate Teaching Assistantship by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2025:***

- A detailed Curriculum Vitae (CV)
  - A cover letter outlining their research interests and suitability for the position
  - Certified copies of academic transcripts and degree certificates
  - A research proposal (maximum three pages) outlining their proposed research project
  - A list of publications
  - Two copies of academic work or publications
  - A letter of nomination from their home (sending) university.
  - Contact information for at least two academic referees
  - A Power Point (no more than 15 slides) summarizing his/her previous experience and skill set with an emphasis his/her teamwork and team player environment.
3. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for an interview.
4. We encourage eligible candidates to apply and take advantage of this opportunity to build their academic and research careers within the RUFORUM network.

### **Contact Information:**

For further inquiries, please contact:

Dr Alba du Toit, (dutoital@ufs.ac.za) and Ms Selma Nghituwamhata (s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org).

### **RUFORUM Secretariat Information:**

For more information on the RUFORUM GTA Programme, please visit the RUFORUM website:  
<https://www.ruforum.org/gta>

**University of the Free State Website:** <https://www.ufs.ac.za/>