

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

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

### **I. 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 that are economically disadvantaged but academically competent to access 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 the 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 pay 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 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.

**Program Name:** PhD in Soil Science

#### **Research Background/Theme:**

Research Chair in Climate Change Impacts and Mitigation in Agriculture, Department of Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. The Department of Soil, Crop, and Climate Sciences invites applications for a Doctoral Fellowship. This fellowship provides an excellent opportunity for early-career researchers to advance their expertise and contribute to cutting-edge research. The candidate is expected to conduct field experiments to investigate the impact of erratic rainfall on the salinisation of agricultural soils, study the relationship between salt load of irrigation water and weather conditions, and model soil salinity dynamics under a changing climate.

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

**Specific Research Project Title (If applicable):** Salinity of Agricultural Soils in the Era of Climate Change

**Research Chair:** Prof AC Franke, Climate Change and Agriculture

**Department:** Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences

**Faculty:** Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

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

1. Hold a relevant Master's degree in soil science, agronomy or a closely related field.
2. Have a publication record in accredited journals, with at least 2 publications.
3. Relevant teaching experience.
4. Be able to conduct independent research.
5. Be under the age of 40.

**Additional Requirements Specific to this Position:**

1. An aptitude for the use of advanced instrumentation
2. Experience with conducting field trials
3. Quantitative skills including the use of models
4. A valid driving license

**Application Process:**

1. Applicants must be nominated by their sending University, a RUFORUM member University.
2. Interested candidates should submit the following documents to Prof Linus Franke, email: FrankeAC@ufs.ac.za and Ms Selma Nghituwamhata ([s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org](mailto:s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org)) with the subject line: *Application for Graduate Teaching Assistantship* by **30 November 2025**[**20<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 brief research proposal (1-3 pages) outlining their proposed research project
  - A letter of nomination from their sending university.
3. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for an interview.

**Contact Information:**

For further inquiries, please contact:

Prof. Linus Franke, Chair Climate Change Impacts and Mitigation in Agriculture, University of the Free State, email: [FrankeAC@ufs.ac.za](mailto:FrankeAC@ufs.ac.za) and Selma Nghituwamhata, [s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org](mailto:s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org)

**RUFORUM Secretariat Information:**

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

For more information on the University of the Free State, see: [www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)