



**THE HEALTH ECONOMICS AND HIV/AIDS RESEARCH DIVISION (HEARD)  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**2027 PHD SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY - *New Registrations***

**REFERENCE NO.: WP6**

**Opening Date: 30 July 2026 - Closing Date: 19 September 2026**

The Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD), based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), is a regional and global leader in applied research and policy development addressing critical health and development challenges across Africa.

HEARD's mission is to influence and support evidence-based policy and good practice to more effectively address Africa's health and development challenges and contribute to improved health and sustainable development across the continent.

**ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP**

HEARD invites applications for a PhD scholarship linked to the **Community-Based Scaling of Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Management (ComBaScale)** research project.

ComBaScale is a Horizon Europe-funded research project that aims to improve community-based prevention, early detection and management of cardiovascular disease while strengthening integrated primary healthcare for people living with cardiovascular disease, HIV and tuberculosis in Lesotho.

**PROPOSED PhD RESEARCH TOPIC**

Understanding the social determinants, stigma and gender-related influences on equitable access to integrated community health worker-led chronic care in Lesotho.

The successful candidate will undertake a mixed-methods doctoral study examining how social determinants of health, stigma, gender norms and socioeconomic vulnerability influence equitable access to integrated community health worker-led chronic care in Lesotho. The research will contribute directly to the implementation and evaluation of the Horizon Europe-funded ComBaScale project.

**WHO SHOULD APPLY?**

Applications are invited from qualified candidates from Lesotho (preferred) and the Southern African region (secondary) who are interested in pursuing full-time doctoral

research as part of the ComBaScale project. Applicants should demonstrate a strong interest in health equity, implementation research, mixed-methods research and community health systems. The successful candidate should be willing to undertake periodic field visits to Lesotho during key phases of the project, including baseline, endline and selected implementation activities.

### **WHAT THE SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS**

- Opportunity to undertake a PhD within a Horizon Europe-funded international research consortium.
- Joint supervision by leading African and European researchers.
- Experience working within a multidisciplinary implementation research programme.
- Opportunities for international collaboration, conference participation and publication.
- Contribution to research informing equitable health system strengthening in Lesotho.

### **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**

- A Master's degree (first or upper second-class pass) in Public Health, Sociology, Social Sciences, Anthropology, Psychology, or a related discipline. Applicants who have not yet completed their Master's degree will not be considered.
- Experience in qualitative or mixed-methods research.
- Experience using qualitative and quantitative analysis software
- A strong interest in implementation research and health equity.
- Fluency in English. Proficiency in Sesotho would be advantageous.
- A valid driver's licence.
- Evidence of publication(s) in a relevant research field will be advantageous.

### **APPLICATION DOCUMENTS**

- A short letter of motivation, please include the advert reference number.
- A comprehensive Curriculum Vitae.
- Certified copies of all academic qualifications and full academic transcripts. An English translation of qualifications obtained in non-English-speaking countries.
- Applicants with qualifications obtained outside South Africa will be required to submit a SAQA evaluation when applying for admission to the PhD programme at UKZN.
- A certified copy of a valid ID or passport.
- Two letters of reference, at least one of which must be an academic reference. The second may be from a suitably qualified professional referee.

Applications must be emailed to [HEARDHR@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HEARDHR@ukzn.ac.za) by **19 September 2026**. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. For enquiries, contact Mrs Robyn-Lee Wagner, +27 31 260 7873/2592.

### **CONDITIONS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP**

- The scholarship is valued at **R214,000.00 per annum**. The scholarship is awarded on an annual basis and may be renewed for up to three additional years (to a maximum of four years of funding in total), subject to satisfactory academic progress and the continued availability of project funding. Renewal is not automatic.
- Award of the scholarship is subject to the applicant meeting the admission requirements for the PhD programme and receiving an offer of admission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- The scholarship is available only to students registering for a **full-time PhD programme in January 2027**.
- The successful candidate must be willing and able to undertake periodic fieldwork visits to Lesotho as required by the research programme. Approved project-related fieldwork expenses, including travel, accommodation and other eligible research-related costs, will be covered separately by the ComBaScale project in accordance with project and University policies.
- Applicants already receiving other scholarships/ funding are not eligible.
- UKZN offers qualifying full-time doctoral students a tuition fee remission for completion of their PhD within three years.
- The adverts can also be found on the HEARD website and LinkedIn page.  
<https://www.heard.org.za/news-post/phd-scholarship-opportunities/>  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/heardukzn>

**Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. If you have not received a response within eight (8) weeks of the closing date, please consider your application unsuccessful.**